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Governance of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

This report provides an overview of governance of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, in line with resolution EUR/RC60/R3.

It is submitted to the 68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in 2018.

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Introduction

1. In 2010 the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, at its 60th session (RC60), adopted resolution EUR/RC60/R3, which requested the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC) to initiate a cycle of comprehensive reviews of governance in the European Region and to report back periodically to the Regional Committee on lessons learned.
2. The present report provides an overview of the main aspects of regional governance since 2010. It should be noted that the Regional Committee, through resolution EUR/RC67/R6, adopted at RC67 in 2017, continued the process of governance reform with regard, notably, to the alignment of global and regional governance as well as more strictly regional issues such as declarations adopted by regional conferences. Finally, the Twenty-fifth SCRC requested its subgroup on governance to focus in particular on three issues to be reported on for consideration by RC68: (a) nomination procedures for the WHO Executive Board and the SCRC; (b) governance of the Regional Office; (c) follow-up of the global discussion on governance.

Nomination procedures for the Executive Board and the SCRC

3. A key element of governance reform in the European Region since 2010 has been how to devise a transparent and democratic system for nominating the eight European members to serve on the Executive Board and the 12 members of the SCRC from among the Region's 53 Member States. That issue has been on the agenda of successive SCRC meetings, including the governance subgroups of the SCRC from 2010 to the present, and is currently regulated by resolution EUR/RC63/R7.
4. The elements listed below make up the pillars of the new nomination process.
 - Three subregional groupings of countries from among the European Region's 53 Member States were adopted through resolution EUR/RC60/R3 and confirmed through resolution EUR/RC63/R7.
 - The same resolutions also stipulated specific criteria for experience and areas of competence which all candidates for the Executive Board and the SCRC should fulfil.
 - The approved criteria have subsequently been broken down by the SCRC subgroup on governance into a number of sub-criteria, against which the CVs of potential candidates are screened and weighted.
 - Two additional criteria have been added, namely the number of years since the country was last represented on the Executive Board or the SCRC, and a letter of intent through which Member States running for office outline the aspirations and objectives linked to their potential Executive Board or SCRC membership. The latter point was formalized through an amendment to Rule 14.2.2 (a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee (resolution EUR/RC65/R2 of 15 September 2015).

- A ranking system with weights assigned to the various criteria and sub-criteria in order of importance has been agreed, following which each SCRC member assigns scores according to their own judgment of the candidates.
- The final results are compiled through a mathematical algorithm, taking all the above parameters into account. The nomination tool fully respects each SCRC member's individual assessment and prioritization. It is, furthermore, fair to all candidates, objective, transparent and explainable to unsuccessful candidates.

5. The subgroup on governance and the Twenty-fifth SCRC discussed the scoring system in March 2018. There was agreement that the tool served a useful purpose both as a guide for Member States and the SCRC, and for injecting evidence into what remains a political process subject to the final decision of the Regional Committee. The SCRC was of the view that the tool put too much emphasis on the individuals presented by Member States. Since the members of the Executive Board and the SCRC are Member States, more emphasis should be given to the engagement of the candidate countries with WHO, and the European Region in particular. This could be achieved through the letter of intent introduced in 2015. The Regional Director was requested to revise the tool accordingly and present this to the SCRC.

6. Finally, the Regional Committee confirmed that the periodicity of membership for permanent members of the United Nations Security Council should remain three out of six years.

Governance of the European Region

7. In addition to the process for nominations to the Executive Board and the SCRC, the European Region has been proactive in governance reform, starting in February 2010 with the establishment of the SCRC subgroup on governance.

8. A summary of governance issues addressed by the SCRC and the Regional Committee since 2010 is provided below. Numerous issues have been studied by the SCRC and its successive subgroups, but for ease of reference they have been grouped under the following seven main topics:

- procedures for nomination of the Regional Director;
- strengthened governance oversight by Member States;
- management of governing body agendas;
- management of resolutions and amendments;
- alignment between global and regional governance;
- management of regional conferences; and
- miscellaneous.

9. A list of resources is provided in the Annex with further information on the topics presented in the present summary.

Procedures for nomination of the Regional Director

10. Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee describes in detail the provisions for the nomination of the WHO Regional Director for Europe. The basic provisions were introduced in 1994, but extensive amendments were subsequently introduced as a result of reviews undertaken by the SCRC and its subgroups in 2010, 2013 and 2015.

11. A major innovation with regard to the nomination of the Regional Director was the adoption in 2013 by resolution EUR/RC63/R7 of a Code of Conduct modelled on a similar code adopted by the World Health Assembly for the election of the Director-General.

12. Initially, Rule 47 prescribed the setting up of a Search Group to identify potential candidates for Regional Director. However, the 2010 SCRC governance subgroup acknowledged the fact that, since Member States are free to both nominate and elect whomever they want as Regional Director, there was little added value in having a group appointed by the Regional Committee to actively search for candidates. A more useful function of this group would be to evaluate the merits or otherwise of the various candidatures based on clear criteria, with the purpose of producing a shortlist of candidates for the Regional Committee's consideration.

13. Consequently Rule 47, in its present form, includes the provisions described below.

- The Regional Committee appoints a Regional Evaluation Group, composed of representatives of six Member States and with a quorum of four, based on equitable geographical representation.
- All Member States proposing a candidate for Regional Director are reminded of the Code of Conduct for nomination of the Regional Director.
- The Regional Evaluation Group makes arrangements for all candidates to give a time-limited, oral presentation at a meeting to which all Member States of the Region are invited. In the interests of due process and transparency, this arrangement applies in all cases, even when there is only one candidate. In order to give all Member States an equal opportunity to attend such a meeting, it is normally convened jointly with the SCRC during the latter's session held immediately prior to the opening of the World Health Assembly.
- All candidates are invited to undergo a medical examination, and to provide a completed WHO medical examination form for the attention of the Director, Health and Medical Services at headquarters, in order to ensure that they enjoy the good physical condition required of all staff members of the Organization.
- Following analysis, review and discussion of the CVs and impressions from the oral presentations, the Regional Evaluation Group prepares individual evaluation reports on all candidates. It concludes its work by preparing an unranked shortlist of not more than five candidates who in its opinion most closely meet the criteria laid down for the post of Regional Director. Individual evaluation reports and the shortlist are sent under confidential cover to the officers of the Regional Committee, the Director-General, and each Member State of the Region not less than 10 weeks before the opening of the Regional Committee.

- The final step in the process is the actual nomination of the Regional Director, which takes place at a private meeting of the Regional Committee, through secret ballot in accordance with Rules 47.12 and 47.13 of the Rules of Procedure.

Strengthened governance oversight by Member States

14. In accordance with Article 50 (b) of the WHO Constitution, a key governance function of the Regional Committee is to “supervise the activities of the regional office”. In view of this, the Regional Committee has over the last few years been reoriented towards a more strategic involvement in regional and global policy debates. At the same time, the Regional Committee has also devolved some oversight functions to the SCRC.

15. As from 2010, the measures described below have been introduced.

- A strengthened oversight function of the SCRC was put in place in 2010 through Resolution EUR/RC60/R3, in line with its basic function “to act for and represent the Regional Committee and to ensure that effect is given to the decisions and policies of the Regional Committee”.¹
- In this regard, it is important to recall that the functions of the SCRC, as laid out in Rule 14.2.10, subsections (a) to (g), are closely modelled on Article 28 of the WHO Constitution, which sets out the functions of the Executive Board vis-à-vis the World Health Assembly. The European Region consequently has a formal two-tier intergovernmental structure – a set-up which might also be of interest to other Regions of the Organization.
- As part of its strengthened oversight and accountability function, the SCRC receives and discusses high-level management reports on key strategic issues, linked to the performance of the Regional Office.
- In order gradually to involve all European Member States in the governance and oversight function of the Organization, while at the same time facilitating a better geographical balance, the membership of the SCRC was in 2010 increased from nine to 12, with four outgoing and four new members selected each year to serve for periods of three years.
- In order to carry out its oversight functions more systematically, the SCRC has conducted visits to four Member States since 2017, examining the work done in collaboration with WHO, including through the country office. So far, the SCRC has visited Georgia, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Turkey.

Management of governing body agendas

16. The question of how better to manage the agendas of the global governing bodies, including the issue of how to limit the number of agenda items, has been a recurring theme at recent sessions of the World Health Assembly and Executive Board.

17. In the European Region, a different but related issue was identified by the 2010 SCRC subgroup on governance, namely the fact that the combination of shortened Regional

¹ Rule 14.2.10 (a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee.

Committee sessions and the large number of agenda items predetermined by preceding sessions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board did not leave sufficient room for debate on important regional priorities.

18. In order to ensure a more strategic approach to the management of Regional Committee agendas, including control of the number of items to be discussed, the measures outlined below have therefore been introduced.

- Regional Committee agendas have been reoriented to focus more on high-level policy and strategic issues of direct relevance to ministers of health (2010).
- Regional Committee agendas include ministerial panel discussions on key policy issues, in order to mobilize European support for global action, whenever called for by World Health Assembly/Executive Board resolutions (2010).
- For the first two days of the Regional Committee sessions, ministerial lunches are also arranged. These typically include presentations and discussions of selected high-level issues not requiring resolutions, thus also contributing to easing the work pressure on the regular Regional Committee agenda.
- Annotated agendas are used which provide information on the planned conduct of the discussions in the Regional Committee (2011).
- A multi-year rolling agenda for Regional Committee sessions has been introduced in order to give delegates a better strategic overview of when agenda items will be tabled (2011). Since 2016 the rolling agenda has been discussed at the open meeting of the SCRC immediately before the World Health Assembly, thus making it available to all Member States of the Region.
- As a consequence of the introduction, at the 140th session of the Executive Board, of a forward-looking planning schedule of expected agenda items for the Executive Board, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, and the World Health Assembly, the Regional Committee at its 67th session (in resolution EUR/RC67/R6) decided to revise the multi-year rolling agenda in line with the forward-looking planning schedule and to add to it a standard item on global items referred to the Regional Committee by the World Health Assembly.

Management of resolutions and amendments

19. Several initiatives have been taken in the European Region over the past five years in order to better manage submission and amendments of Regional Committee resolutions. In this work, the SCRC and its subgroups have tried to balance the legitimate interest of Member States in advancing their priorities through draft resolutions on the one hand, with the potential for overcrowding the Regional Committee's agenda and the disruption which late proposals may create on the other.

20. As of 2015, the ground rules listed below apply to the management of resolutions in the Regional Committee.

- In order to support Member States, and in the interest of transparency, individual SCRC members are designated as focal points for specific technical agenda items and resolutions (resolution EUR/RC63/R7, Annex 4).

- All draft resolutions for the Regional Committee should in principle be reviewed by the SCRC, and should be ready for the open meeting of the SCRC in May for consideration by all European Member States (2011).
- New rules were introduced in 2013 regarding minimum time limits for the tabling of draft resolutions and substantive amendments, as follows (with similar procedures later adopted globally by the Executive Board in decision EB134(3) in January 2014 and the World Health Assembly in resolution WHA67.2 in May 2014).
 - Draft resolutions and/or decisions by Member States must be introduced in writing at least seven days prior to the opening of the Regional Committee session.
 - Substantive amendments to such proposals must normally be introduced in writing not later than the closure of the first day of the session.
 - Draft proposals by the Secretariat relating to items on the agenda must be sent to Member States at least six weeks prior to the opening of the session.
 - Substantive amendments to such Secretariat proposals should normally be introduced in writing 24 hours before the opening of the session.
- Annual reviews of past resolutions have been instituted to identify their expected lifespan and their potential for being phased out (sunsetting). A table summarizing all existing and active resolutions is updated annually after each Regional Committee, and made available through a web portal. Member States contemplating the circulation of new resolutions can thus obtain guidance on whether or not such new proposals would overlap or duplicate existing work (2013).
- In 2014, the SCRC subgroup on governance also recommended new templates for future Regional Committee resolutions. While a template for the financial and administrative implications of resolutions was routinely used at sessions of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly, and had also been used at sessions of the Regional Committee, the subgroup felt that more clarity was required concerning how new resolutions linked up with the general programme of work, the programme budget, the Health 2020 strategy and previous resolutions of the Executive Board, World Health Assembly and Regional Committee.

Alignment between global and regional governance

21. One of the main purposes of the reform of WHO's governance initiated in 2011 was to align the governance of the various levels of WHO in order to ensure their synergy and complementarity and thus better effectiveness of the overall governance cycle.

22. In this connection the World Health Assembly, in decision WHA65(9), decided that regional committees should be asked to comment on all global strategies, policies and legal instruments, that regional committees adapt and implement global strategies rather than adopting regional strategies, and that chairpersons of regional committees should routinely submit a summary report of the committees' deliberations to the Executive Board. The World Health Assembly also decided that regional committees should review the process for the

nomination of regional directors, establish a process for the review of credentials of delegates, and adopt rules for the participation of observers in the sessions of the regional committees.

23. The reform of the process for the nomination of the Regional Director is summarized above. In addition, the Regional Committee amended, in resolution EUR/RC63/R7, Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure with regard to the participation of observers and decided in 2013 that a subset of the SCRC will review delegates' credentials.

24. With regard to the regional implications of global policies, the Regional Committee in 2017 requested the Regional Director to bring to the attention of the Regional Committee global policies, strategies and action plans under Matters arising and to highlight the implications of those instruments for the Region for consideration and possible further action by the Regional Committee.

25. The Regional Committee also agreed in 2017 (in resolution EUR/RC67/R6) on measures to raise the profile of the reports of the chairpersons of the Regional Committee to the Executive Board. In particular, each report developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the chairperson is discussed with the SCRC, key messages are developed and a short statement is prepared for delivery either by one of the Regional Committee's officers or by the Executive Board member nominated as liaison between the Regional Committee and the Executive Board.

26. In March 2018 the Twenty-fifth SCRC and its subgroup on governance discussed the regional implications of the governance reform proposals submitted by the Director-General to the 142nd session of the WHO Executive Board but postponed until the 143rd session in May 2018. Among the proposals that attracted attention because of their regional implications were: first, restricting rights of participation to Executive Board members and whether this would require or promote regional statements; and secondly, the proposal that the Officers of the Executive Board should meet in person more frequently to discuss the programme and methods of work, which has regional implications in terms of the support that can be provided by the Regional Office and the question of how to ensure a channel of communication with regional governance bodies. The Executive Board at its 143rd session discussed the topic further. There was no consensus on restricting rights of participation to Executive Board members only, but the Bureau member of the European Region explicitly requested the Regional Director to discuss further with the SCRC an appropriate communication channel with Member States of the Region.

Management of regional conferences

27. In 2017 the Regional Committee approved the recommendations of the Regional Director that the SCRC should be actively involved in the preparatory stages of regional conferences and that declarations issued by such conferences would be brought to the attention of the Regional Committee either for action or for information, but only if the SCRC was satisfied that certain criteria of good governance and inclusiveness were met.

Miscellaneous

28. In addition to the above-mentioned broad categories of governance reform, the WHO European Region has taken several initiatives in other areas, in order to ease the burden on Member States and facilitate their active participation in the work of the Organization, as described below.

- In respect of global governing bodies, the Secretariat prepares extensive, advance briefing documents for European Member States, covering all items on the agendas of the global governing bodies, and organizes information meetings/briefings prior to, and daily during, meetings of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly to help with the global–regional interface.
- For Regional Committee meetings, the following measures have been put in place:
 - live webcasting of the entire proceedings of the Regional Committee, since 2010, as a means of promoting transparency and understanding of the Organization’s work;
 - webcasting of pre-session briefings for Regional Committee sessions, with the option of sending advance, written questions to the Secretariat;
 - English/Russian parallel projection of slides at Regional Committee sessions, since 2012, whenever presentations are made;
 - also since 2012, posting of nongovernmental organization statements and related video messages on the website of the WHO Regional Office for Europe prior to the opening of the Regional Committee sessions; and
 - advance publication of working documents for Regional Committee sessions in English, one month prior to the official dispatch date, since 2012 (with a disclaimer that further corrections and amendments may still occur, up until the official date of dispatch).
- The following measures have been put in place as regards the SCRC:
 - extensive use of teleconferences between sessions of the SCRC; and
 - electronic clearance and adoption of SCRC reports shortly after the closure of meetings, thus ensuring that Member States that are not represented on the SCRC also have early access to these reports.

Annex. List of resources with further information on governance reform

- Document EUR/RC60/11, Governance of the WHO Regional Office for Europe: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixtieth-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc6011>
- Resolution EUR/RC60/R3, Governance of the WHO Regional Office for Europe: Amendments to the methods of work and Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee and of the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixtieth-session/resolutions/eurrc60r6>
- Document EUR/RC62/14, WHO reform: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixty-second-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc6214-who-reform>
- Document EUR/RC63/15, WHO reform: progress and implications for Europe: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixty-third-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc6315-who-reform-progress-and-implications-for-europe>
- Document EUR/RC63/16 Rev.1, Governance reform in the European Region: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixty-third-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc6316-rev.1-governance-reform-in-the-who-european-region>
- Resolution EUR/RC63/R7, Governance of the WHO Regional Office for Europe: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/sixty-third-session/documentation/resolutions-and-decisions/eurrc63r7-governance-of-the-who-regional-office-for-europe>
- Document EUR/RC64/16, WHO reform: progress and implications for the European Region: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/past-sessions/64th-session/documentation/working-documents/eurrc6416-who-reform-progress-and-implications-for-the-european-region>
- Document EUR/SC21/SG_governance Rev.1, Report of the subgroup on governance: May 2014: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/257115/SC21_SubGov_Eng_140583-Rev.1.pdf?ua=1
- Template for draft Regional Committee resolutions
- Template for financial and administrative implications for the Secretariat of draft Regional Committee resolutions

- Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee for Europe and of the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe:
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/rules-of-procedure-of-the-regional-committee-for-europe-and-of-the-standing-committee-of-the-regional-committee-for-europe>

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