



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for the functioning of HEPA Europe, the European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity and to describe the strategic, technical and operational focus of its work and that of its Steering Committee.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed on a yearly basis, based on proposals submitted at the annual meetings of the Network. Proposals for changes can be submitted at least two weeks before the last meeting of the Steering Committee before the annual meeting.

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## 1. Mission, objectives and guiding principles

HEPA Europe is a WHO/Europe network which works for better health and wellbeing in the WHO European Region through more physical activity for all people. Its *mission* is to provide a forum for the advancement of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) research, policy and practice across the WHO European region.

The *objectives* are to:

- Foster inter-disciplinary communication and knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners and policymakers;
- Facilitate sharing of experiences and best practice in HEPA promotion;
- Contribute to the development of multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral policies and strategies for HEPA;
- Strengthen collaboration within and between sectors to advance HEPA research, practice and policy;
- Provide capacity building opportunities to researchers, practitioners and policymakers to strengthen the skillset of the HEPA workforce;
- Deliver and support advocacy actions for the creation and maintenance of supportive social, physical, and policy environments for HEPA;
- Provide a strong voice for the HEPA agenda.

*Guiding principles* for the network are:

- Focus on population-based approaches for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity, using the best available scientific evidence;
- Encouragement of exchange, dissemination and sharing of experience and knowledge;
- Support of cooperation, partnerships and collaboration with other related sectors, networks, and approaches.

All activities of HEPA Europe are based on WHO policy statements, such as the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA), the European Strategy on Physical Activity, the Global Strategy for Diet, Physical Activity and Health, the NCD Action Plan and corresponding documents from the European Commission.

## 2. General ways of working

HEPA Europe consists of a steering committee, a secretariat, member organisations and working groups. The steering committee (paragraph 3) constitutes the principal executive body for the network and is responsible for providing guidance and strategic directions to the activities of the network. The secretariat (paragraph 4) provides the overall coordination of the development and maintenance of the network and participates in the activities of the network in close consultation with the steering committee. Member organisations (paragraph 5) are expected to contribute to the objectives of the network by participating in its activities. They are provided the opportunity to operate within one or more thematic working groups (paragraph 6) of HEPA Europe.

Every year, a HEPA Europe conference provides the opportunity for member organisations and others to meet and exchange knowledge and experiences. Usually during the conference, HEPA Europe organises its annual meeting to update member organisations on relevant developments. On a regular basis, HEPA Europe provides a newsletter to member organisations and others that have subscribed.

## 3. Steering committee

The steering committee is the main executive body for the network. The structure and way of working of the steering committee supports the continuity and sustainability of the network. The Steering Committee makes decisions on a consensus basis, defines its own structure, and is assisted by the secretariat.

### *Responsibilities of the steering committee*

The steering committee is responsible for providing guidance and strategic direction to the activities of the network. In particular, the steering committee

- gives direction and support to the network to ensure effective functioning;
- supports the chairperson of HEPA Europe in carrying out his or her duties, in collaboration with the secretariat;
- supports the organising and program committee of the annual conference;
- facilitates co-ordination and links with other relevant networks or international activities, to promote synergy;
- liaises and cooperates closely with relevant WHO programs, and develops collaboration with other relevant intergovernmental organisations such as the European Commission, in particular the HEPA Focal Point network and others as appropriate, as well as with non-governmental organisations that are active in the fields of promoting physical activity, with the exclusion of private-for profit organisations;
- identifies appropriate sources and mechanisms for funding the network's programme of work;
- promotes the development of and approve proposals for activities and projects to be implemented as part of the network's programme of work;
- establishes working groups, task forces and other bodies as needed to implement the activities agreed under the network's programme of work;
- monitors progress on the implementation of the network's programme of work and related projects;
- prepares assessments or reviews of progress and proposes new priorities and actions, if need be;
- contributes to the dissemination of the network activities and supports the identification of dissemination opportunities (e.g. by organising workshops within the framework of major scientific meetings or other occasions, and taking part in relevant events).

### *Steering committee membership*

The steering committee is composed of a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 representatives of member organisations. One of these seats is permanently occupied by a designated representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The steering committee appoints another of these seats to an executive member to support its work.

The steering committee is chaired by the chairperson of HEPA Europe, whose main roles are

- to provide advice for the implementation of the work programme, working in close collaboration with the executive member, the secretariat and steering committee; and
- to represent HEPA Europe publicly in different fora, events and meetings.

After resignation or end of their mandate, past members and chairpersons of the steering committee become fellows of HEPA Europe, as individuals serving as senior advisors to the network. The most recent past chairperson may serve as vice-chairperson. An additional vice-chairperson, not necessarily chair-elect, can be installed as decided upon by the steering committee.

Each steering committee member is required to take responsibility for a specific subject area regarding the network for which he or she acts as a liaison person for member organisations, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and persons or organisations outside the network. These subject areas are defined by the steering committee; examples are working groups, web, twitter, annual conference, early careers, newsletter, memberships.

### *Steering committee elections*

Members of the steering committee are elected and can be re-elected on a bi-annual basis in odd numbered years by the confirmed member organisations of HEPA Europe. If one or more members resign from the steering committee during the term, the respective seat will remain vacant until the next election. Should the number of steering committee members go below 10 during the first year of the term, an ad hoc interim election is held for the vacant seat(s), after a year for a one-year term.

In preparation of the steering committee election, the executive member makes an inventory among the steering committee members taking note of their interest in re-election. Potential new steering committee members can be nominated by representatives of confirmed member organisations of HEPA Europe. In order to be considered a nominee, a letter of support from representatives of two

different confirmed member organisations of HEPA Europe needs to be sent to the steering committee, 3 months before the annual meeting. A list of interested current steering committee members and potential new steering committee members (the latter supported with the appropriate number of letters of support) needs to be in place 2 weeks before the last meeting of the steering committee before the annual meeting. In case of more than 13 nominees, the 13 nominees with the most votes from the members present at the annual meeting will be installed. Steering committee members may serve a maximum of 5 terms. If this causes the number of steering committee members to go below 10 and no new steering committee members have been nominated, the steering committee may consider to extend this with another term.

The chairperson is elected and can be re-elected to serve a two-year term by the confirmed member organisations of the network. A maximum of two terms may be served. The Steering Committee may also propose a chair-elect to be nominated for election for a two-year term. The process of nomination for the chairperson and a chair-elect is similar to that of the steering committee members. The executive member makes an inventory of interest among current members of the steering committee. The nomination(s) should be supported by at least a 2/3 majority of the current steering committee members and should be in place two weeks before the last meeting of the steering committee before the annual meeting. In case of multiple nominations for one position, the nominee with the most votes of the members present at the annual meeting will be installed as chairperson.

#### **4. Secretariat**

The secretariat consists of the WHO secretariat team and the executive member of the steering committee who together provide the overall coordination of the development and maintenance of the network. The secretariat participates in the delivery of the work programme (paragraph 7) in close consultation with the steering committee. Task descriptions are made in collaboration with the steering committee as activities arise. Apart from this, there are basic tasks defined for both parties:

##### *The WHO secretariat team*

- Handles applications for membership and manages the membership database;
- Maintains the website for the network;
- Supports the executive member in organising steering committee meetings;
- Supports the organising committee of the annual conference;
- Supports working group leaders in organising working group meetings;
- Provides a rapporteur for the annual meeting, writing the annual meeting report;
- Supports the steering committee in the development and implementation of a survey among members (every two years) and stakeholders of HEPA Europe (if needed);
- Disseminates relevant information among members of the network in collaboration with the steering committee through the newsletter and other communications (e.g. website).

##### *The executive member of the steering committee*

- Organises the steering committee meetings in close collaboration with the chairperson and the WHO secretariat team;
- Prepares background documents for the steering committee meetings and the annual meeting;
- Supports the organising committee of the annual conference;
- Liaises between the WHO secretariat and the steering committee for all relevant topics.

#### **5. Member organisations**

HEPA Europe offers an 'organisational' membership. Member organisations of HEPA Europe have active voting rights (one vote per member organisation) and employees of members are eligible for reduced participation fees in HEPA Europe events (paragraph 8). Employees of member organisations may be nominated to become a member of the steering committee (paragraph 3). Moreover, employees of member organisations are provided the opportunity to collaborate within one or more thematic working groups (paragraph 6).

##### *Responsibilities of member organisations*

By joining HEPA Europe, member organisations express their willingness and commitment to contribute to the objectives and the activities of the network and to actively participate in the annual HEPA Europe conference.

Member organisations of HEPA Europe may not use their membership status in a way that is contradictory to the goals and standards of HEPA Europe and WHO Europe. Member organisations can refer to their membership on the organisation's websites and in their annual reports. In both cases, the mention should be factual and should be made in a technical context related to work in the area of HEPA Europe. The mention should not be made in a manner that suggests an overall endorsement by HEPA Europe of the activities of the member organisation. Accordingly the mention should not be on the opening page of a website, or on the cover of an annual report, or otherwise used in a promotional manner. The mention cannot include the use of the WHO emblem.

In order to disseminate information to its member organisations, HEPA Europe needs a contact person for every member organisation. For the continuity of communication with member organisations, HEPA Europe will be provided with contact information for a first and second contact person. If one or both of these persons for any reason can no longer fulfil this role, the member organisation shall provide the HEPA Europe secretariat with contact information for one or two new contact person(s).

#### *Membership fee*

HEPA Europe has no compulsory membership fee. However, the network strongly encourages and welcomes voluntary contributions, either on a regular basis or as a single contribution, such as:

- Financial contributions;
- In-kind contributions in terms of time and expertise, e.g. through the participation in the steering committee, working groups and/or projects;
- Hosting of meetings of the network or working groups;
- Clearing house function for the collection of documents or case studies; or
- Representation of the HEPA Europe network at expert meetings and conferences.

Contributions made to HEPA Europe do not imply a commitment for further contributions by the donors.

#### *Applying for membership*

Membership of HEPA Europe is open to organisations and institutions within the WHO European region that are of regional, national or international importance and willing to contribute to the goals and objectives of the network.

Organisations and institutions whose activities or goals are contradictory to the goals and standards of HEPA Europe and WHO are not eligible for membership in HEPA Europe. This is the case if an organisation or institution has a direct or indirect relationship with organisations or industries that counteract WHO's health aims, recommendations or ethical standards (e.g. tobacco industry or others). Explicitly: private-for profit organisations will not be considered for membership.

Interested organisations and institutions can enter the membership procedure through the [WHO HEPA Europe webpage](#). Below, the membership procedure is explained.

1. Applicant expresses interest of becoming a member of HEPA Europe by:
  - Completing the letter of intent, signing it and sending it to HEPA Europe by e-mail;
  - Completing the online application questionnaire and submitting it. This questionnaire is aimed at gathering general information about the organisation / institution;
2. Eligibility for membership is checked by the HEPA Europe secretariat using the following criteria<sup>1</sup>:
  - Signature of a person authorized to represent the respective organisation or institution is present on the letter of intent;
  - Funding information given in the application questionnaire and additional information on the applicant's website does not conflict with WHO's aims, recommendations and/or ethical standards;
  - A first and second contact person are appointed, meaning a name and e-mail address are provided;

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<sup>1</sup> In case of missing information, the applicant is contacted to complete the documents. A maximum of two reminders will be sent before terminating the membership procedure.

- The type of the organisation is clearly categorized and marked: public, private-not-for-profit, private-public-not-for-profit, or private-for-profit.
3. At this point the membership procedure follows a pathway depending on the type of organisation.
    - a. Private-for-profit applicants are informed that the organisation is not eligible for HEPA Europe membership;
    - b. Applications from private-not-for-profit organisations are forwarded to the WHO partnership department in order to double-check eligibility in terms of possible conflicts with WHO's aims, recommendations and/or ethical standards. Applicants are informed that their application is considered for this step. Within two months, the applicant receives a decision on eligibility;
    - c. Public organisations are eligible to become a member of HEPA Europe. Applicants are informed that their application is considered for this step.
  4. At every steering committee meeting, the HEPA Europe secretariat provides a list of new applications to inform the committee of the interest in the network.
    - a. Applications from eligible organisations are discussed during the meeting and the steering committee decides whether or not membership can be granted.
    - b. Within four weeks following such a steering committee meeting, the applicant receives a decision on membership.
    - c. At the annual meeting, the members will be informed about the outcome of the membership procedure of the preceding year.

#### *Terminating membership*

Member organisations of HEPA Europe have the right to withdraw from the Network at any time if they do not wish to continue their membership by giving one month's notice in writing. The termination will become effective after a confirmation has been sent by e-mail by the secretariat to the member organisation terminating membership.

In order to disseminate information to its member organisations, HEPA Europe is provided with contact information for a first and second contact person. Member organisations are responsible for providing this information. To further aid continuity of communication with member organisations, the HEPA Europe secretariat will contact all member organisations on an annual basis in order to verify the available contact information. If for both contact persons the contact information is no longer available and if the member organisation fails to provide contact details for new contact persons within a year, membership will be terminated.

## **6. Working groups**

Employees of member organisations of HEPA Europe are provided the opportunity to collaborate within one or more thematic working groups. If interested in participating in a working group, they can contact the working group leader(s). Working group members are expected to

- Share their 'profile' detailing their expertise and interests to foster collaboration
- Indicate what form their commitments to achieving the goals of the working group will take
- Engage actively with the working group and provide input in a timely fashion

HEPA Europe working groups are organisational arrangements that address an issue concerning health-enhancing physical activity, by strengthening and supporting efforts to increase participation and improve the conditions for healthy lifestyles. They are typically created to address a specific topic (e.g. physical activity assessment, physical activity promotion in a health care setting) or to produce specific deliverables (e.g. reviews, good practice collections, checklists, tools). They provide knowledge and expertise to the activities of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and contribute to the goals and objectives of the network.

#### *Formation and termination*

Working groups can be time limited based on specific deliverables or open-ended.

Working groups may be formed at the request of HEPA Europe member organisations, one or more members of the steering committee or the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The steering committee will be presented with a proposal that includes:

- Title of the proposed working group
- Name(s) and contact details of the working group leader(s) and the deputy
- Specific contribution/added value of the working group to the activities of HEPA Europe
- Scope and objectives
- Expected activities and deliverables
- Approximate timeline for a period of 2-3 years
- (Foreseen) resources for activities and capacity of working group leader(s)
- Dissemination (communication of activities and results)

This proposal will be considered the initial work program of the working group. The proposal will be evaluated by the steering committee to see if it is a topic of interest and concern to the HEPA Europe network and its member organisations. In particular, the adequacy of the scope and objective(s) of the working group and the specific contribution/added-value of the working group to the activities of HEPA Europe will be considered. Once found to be adequate, the steering committee will present the proposal for endorsement at the HEPA Europe annual meeting.

Upon achievement of its objectives or sustained inability to make progress, the working group will be discontinued unless the working group decides on a new work plan.

#### *Organisation and management*

Each working group has at least one working group leader and at least one deputy to ensure back-up and continuity. These leaders are responsible for organizing the WG and reporting on its activities, in particular their main responsibilities are to:

- Coordinate a list of members with a mailing list for communication purposes and a list of available expertise for the purpose to support the activities of the WHO Regional Office for Europe;
- Coordinate the preparation and the implementation of the work program of the working group;
- Maintain regular exchange with working group members and encourage active participation in the activities of the working group;
- Work with the WHO secretariat team to organise meetings for the working group members to support the activities of the working group;
- Draft and submit progress reports to the steering committee liaison person assigned to the working group at least twice a year;
- Provide a progress report addressing activities and deliverables at the annual meeting.

Working groups can decide to have a 'core-group' who take responsibility for activities in the work plan. In this case, progress should be reported to other working group members on a regular basis.

Working groups should arrange an election of their leader(s) as well as a self-evaluation about every two years. The steering committee should be informed of the results of elections.

Each working group has a member of the HEPA Europe steering committee assigned as their liaison person. This liaison person can provide feedback, support and guidance, as needed, and serves as counterpart of the regular reporting.

If the working group is inactive, working group members are invited to try and resolve this in the first place with the working group leaders. Otherwise they may contact the steering committee liaison person for advice and possible support.



*Work plan and deliverables*

To create a work plan, the initial work plan that was presented as the proposal for the working group upon its formation is supplemented with a more detailed description of the proposed activities including

- The person and/or organisation in charge of the activity
- Other members involved and their expected input
- Expected outcomes and deliverables
- Time-frame

Working groups are strongly encouraged to work towards specific products (e.g. a working group meeting, a report, tools/materials, survey, leaflet, webinar) over an appropriate time frame. Solely promoting networking has shown to be insufficient for a sustained good functioning of working groups.

Any products of the working group that are published under a HEPA Europe banner have to be shared with the steering committee liaison person in advance. The support of the HEPA Europe working group for a product needs to be properly acknowledged.

An up-to-date list of working groups and the accompanying liaison person from the steering committee may be found on the HEPA Europe webpage.

**7. Programme of work and newsletter**

The activities of HEPA Europe will be reported during the annual meeting addressing new developments and the progress of the working groups.

Throughout the remainder of the year, a selection of the activities of the network and its working groups will be reported in the regular newsletter. Additional content of the newsletter will be provided by member organisations and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The newsletter is sent to the two contact persons of the member organisations. They are invited to further spread the information to their network. In order to reach a wider public and potential new member organisations, individuals are given the opportunity to sign up for the HEPA Europe mailing list.

HEPA Europe makes an effort to include activities for early career people for example in terms of dedicated meetings during the annual conference and organising webinars. Early career people are also encouraged to participate in the annual conference for example by having an early career award in place.

**8. Interactions and meetings**

HEPA Europe has two annual events in place: the annual conference and the annual meeting for members. Both are usually conjoint and hosted by a member. Other topic oriented meetings, e.g. webinars, workshops or conferences, can be recommended, supported, or organised by HEPA Europe upon decision by the steering committee and under coordination and guidance of the secretariat.

In order to support collaboration with other international organisations and institutions, the steering committee may establish new structures and organisational bodies to promote linkages, communication and regular exchange.

*Annual conference*

The steering committee aims to have a host in place two years in advance of the conference. Each year, a call for hosts will be communicated in preparation of the annual conference (unless for a reason the host for that year is already known). The host for the annual conference is selected by the steering committee following a formal bid process. The host will liaise with the executive member of the steering committee, the chairperson and the designated representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe regarding progress in organising the conference.

The host is expected to host a meeting website and to handle registration and abstract submission. The conference is open to everyone, but members are expected to have a reduced fee. The host is

invited to facilitate break out rooms and time in the programme for working group sessions and to provide a meeting room for the annual meeting during the conference.

In preparation of the conference, an organising and programme committee will be installed. The organising committee is supported by the WHO secretariat team and the executive member of the steering committee. The host determines the conference programme, in consultation with the steering committee. Steering committee members will be available for participation in the program committee and for reviewing abstracts. The host is invited to include participants from the national and regional/local government in the programme in order to foster knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners and policymakers. The WHO Regional Office for Europe offers support in doing so. Also, an effort will be made to include the HEPA Focal Point network in the conference.

The executive member of the steering committee will provide the host with a detailed planning scheme for preparing the conference.

#### *Annual meeting*

Usually, the annual meeting is organised back-to-back with the annual conference and hosted by a member. Access to the annual meeting is restricted to members of HEPA Europe. The purpose of the annual meeting is to:

- elect the members of the steering committee;
- decide upon changes in the HEPA Europe Terms of Reference;
- review progress on ongoing activities;
- establish new working groups.

The annual meeting will be documented in a report which will be placed on the WHO HEPA Europe webpage.