



Call for hosts of the annual conference and annual meeting of HEPA Europe 2026

INTRODUCTION

This document provides information for organizations planning to put in a bid for the call for hosts of the annual conference and annual meeting of the European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Europe 2026. It includes information about the eligibility of host organization, the procedure and selection process as well as details regarding organization of the conference.

About HEPA Europe

HEPA Europe is the European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity and a World Health Organization (WHO) Europe network. The mission of HEPA Europe is to provide a forum for the advancement of HEPA research, policy and practice for better health and well-being across the WHO European Region.

Objectives

- Foster interdisciplinary communication and knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.
- Facilitate sharing of experiences and best practice in HEPA promotion.
- Contribute to the development of multisectoral and intersectoral policies and strategies for HEPA.
- Strengthen collaboration within and between sectors to advance HEPA research, practice and policy.
- Provide capacity-building opportunities for researchers, practitioners and policy-makers 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

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

HEPA Europe holds annual meetings and, on most occasions, the annual meeting is held at the same time as a scientific conference. HEPA Europe seeks to use the annual meeting and conference to help achieve the network's objectives and guiding principles

To date, 16 meetings have taken place in cities across Europe¹:

2005	Gerlev, Denmark	2012	Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom	2019	Odense, Denmark
2006	Tampere, Finland	2013	Helsinki, Finland	2020	<i>postponed due to COVID</i>
2007	Graz, Austria	2014	Zürich, Switzerland	2021	<i>postponed due to COVID</i>

¹ For reports and books of abstracts see [https://www.who.int/europe/groups/hepa-europe-\(european-network-for-the-promotion-of-health-enhancing-physical-activity\)](https://www.who.int/europe/groups/hepa-europe-(european-network-for-the-promotion-of-health-enhancing-physical-activity))

2008	Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom	2015	Istanbul, Türkiye	2022	Nice, France
2009	Bologna, Italy	2016	Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom	2023	Leuven, Belgium
2010	Olomouc, Czechia	2017	Zagreb, Croatia	2024	Dublin, Ireland
2011	Amsterdam, Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	2018	London, England, United Kingdom		

ELIGIBILITY OF THE HOST ORGANIZATIONS

It is essential that the aims and objectives of the Host Organization are consistent with those of HEPA Europe and WHO Regional Office for Europe. It is desirable that the Host Organization is an academic institution or closely linked with an academic institution with expertise in physical activity and health. It is also desirable for the Host to have a track record in working with, or contributing to, the objectives of the network.

It is highly desirable that the Host Organization will look to leverage the opportunity of hosting the conference to further national actions on physical activity and plan for a conference legacy. The Host Organization is strongly encouraged to collaborate with relevant interested stakeholders across government, non-government, academia and civil society to secure the maximum impact and benefit from hosting the conference. This may include, but is not limited to, hosting pre and/or post conference satellite events, meetings or workshops and co-hosting the conference.

PROCEDURE AND SELECTION PROCESS

For the conference and annual meeting of 2026, institutions interested in hosting the event are kindly invited to submit a written expression of interest by Friday 14 February 2025.

Submissions are to be made by 14 February 2025 to hepaeurope@who.int

Requirements

Submissions should address the following points:

- Experience of the local organizing committee addressing organizing international events, health-enhancing physical activity, and involvement in the HEPA Europe network;
- Initial ideas for a conference topic;
- Preliminary budget including registration fees for delegates, catering, expendibles and social activities.
- Support of the hosting institution (financial and/or in kind, including for example meals, secretariat-support, on-site helpers, printing of documents);
- Foreseen communication activities for local and international visibility;
- Description of the venue including the attractiveness of the venue, capacity of the venue and accessibility of the venue (in particular closeness to an international airport, ease of transfers and ease of travel between airport and venue);
- Choice of convenient and affordable accommodation;

- Efforts to minimise the environmental impact of hosting the conference and/or how it will be used to promote sustainability and climate protection.

ASSESSMENT

Please note that the assessment of each application is done based on the above points. In addition to the above, the Steering Committee will also consider geographic distribution of hosting institutions. Therefore, submitters are kindly requested to address each point in their application, and not to go beyond 4 pages of text (minimum font size 10).

Additional information on organizational requirements, previous registration fees and number of participants is available upon request from hepaeurope@who.int

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

After awarding the organization of the next HEPA conference and annual meeting, an agreement shall be made between the HEPA Europe Steering Committee and the Host Organization of the country in which the conference is to be held.

HEPA Europe Steering Committee will

- Disseminate marketing and promotional materials via HEPA Europe's communication channels (e.g. newsletter and social media).
- Work with the host organization to advise on conference proposals.
- Liaise with the working groups to determine conference activities.
- Liaise with WHO Regional Office for Europe to determine the EU Physical Activity Focal Point Network requirements.
- Provide onsite support during the conference.
- Work with the host organization to compile a post-conference report.

The Host Organization will

- Be responsible for the organization, administration and all financial aspects of the conference
- Establish an Organizing Committee (see box below) which will oversee logistics and planning of the conference such as sourcing a venue, managing logistics including audio-visual services, and event management.
- Establish, in collaboration with HEPA Europe, a Scientific Committee (see box below) which will be responsible for the organization of the scientific program of the conference.
- Provide onsite support during the conference.
- Work with the HEPA Europe Steering Committee to compile a post conference report.

Organizing Committee

Membership of the committee should be carefully selected to reflect the full range of tasks to be undertaken and completed in the preparations of the conference such as sourcing a venue, managing logistics including audio-visual services, and event management. At least one member of the organizing committee should be an Early Career Professional² from the Host Organization or other

² Within HEPA Europe we interpret early career broadly and that has been quite deliberate. It can mean researchers within five years of their first academic post, such as research assistants, postgraduate research students, postdocs, but equally applies to any professional such as practitioners or policymakers who are looking for support in using research in their work, as well as those who consider themselves to be an early career representative (irrespective of how long they've been in post).

local agency. The Early Career Professional will specifically support the HEPA Europe Early Career Section in organizing activities for early career delegates. The organizing committee is invited to seek creative opportunities to involve the EU Physical Activity Focal Point Network to maximise knowledge exchange during the conference.

Scientific Committee

Membership of the committee should be proposed by the Host Organization and can include international members. At least one member of the scientific committee will be a member of the HEPA Europe Steering committee.

THE CONFERENCE

Language

The official language of the conference will be English.

Dates

The HEPA Europe conference is usually held over 2.5 days. For organizational reasons and to avoid clashes with other events, the 2026 annual meeting should preferably take place in between September - October). Organisers should seek early exchange with HEPA Europe regarding possible dates. It is not necessary to make date proposals for a submission of the expression of interest.

Website

The host organization is required to develop and manage a secure conference website, including an abstract submission system.

The Host Organization is required to manage the registration of delegates through the conference website. The conference programme outline should be finalized before registration is launched to ensure that delegates can sign up to all available sessions and activities that require pre-registration (e.g. Early Career Award, Working Group meetings and social activities).

Financial terms

The Host Organization is encouraged to keep costs to a minimum to ensure an attractive event for delegates whilst breaking even. Hosts are encouraged to secure support either in kind contributions or funding support. All financial contributors should align with HEPA Europe's aims and objectives and ensure that there are no direct or indirect interest exists which may be considered as constituting a conflict of interest with the HEPA Europe Network or that counteract WHO's aims, recommendations or ethical standards.

The Host Organization is encouraged to develop a preliminary budget for the conference, including registration fees for delegates, catering, expendables and social activities. Registration rates for HEPA members should be significantly lower than non-member rates and we would strongly encourage reduced rates for students as well as consideration of a one-day registration fee.

Structure of the conference

The conference should contain combinations of the following formats:

- Opening ceremony.
- Invited keynotes.

- Oral communications (concurrent across multiple themes).
- Poster, e-poster, pitch-oral or other similar rapid presentation style sessions.
- Invited symposia.
- Closing ceremony.

Specific requirements

- **HEPA Europe Working Group Meetings**

During the conference, each of HEPA Europe's working groups (~10) should be given an opportunity within the programme to meet with members. These meetings can be held in parallel but Host Organizations are requested to schedule these across two conference days to allow members to attend multiple working group meetings.

- **HEPA Europe Network Annual General Meeting**

During the conference the HEPA Europe Network will hold its annual general meeting. The meeting should take place at a time when no other sessions are being held so allow for maximum attendance. The Host Organization is required to help arrange this 60-minute meeting and venue.

- **HEPA Europe Steering Committee Meeting**

During the conference, the network will hold a face-to-face steering committee meeting, usually the day before the opening ceremony. The meeting will be a minimum of 60 minutes. The Host Organization is asked to help arrange a venue.

- **European Union Physical Activity Focal Points Network Meeting**

During the conference, the EU Physical Activity Focal Points Network will hold their face-to-face annual meeting, usually the day before the opening ceremony or day after the closing ceremony. The meeting will be a day in duration for up to ~35 people. The Host Organization is asked to help arrange this meeting and venue in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe which coordinates the EU PA focal points network.

- **European Union Physical Activity Focal Points Network Market Place**

During the conference, the EU Physical Activity Focal Points Network should be invited to hold a marketplace sharing session to promote exchange and networking with delegates. The Host Organization is asked to help arrange this activity in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe which coordinates the EU PA focal points network.

- **HEPA Europe Early Career Award**

HEPA Europe believes in the importance of supporting researchers at an early stage in their career to develop their professional identity. An Early Career Research Award has been established to recognize the contribution of early career researchers at the start of their scientific journey. Early career researchers will have the opportunity to enter this competition for scientific excellence. The abstract submission process and platform should allow for authors to indicate their eligibility and interest in being considered for this award.

- **Social programme**

The Host Organization are invited to suggest potential venues and themes for the social functions during the conference, as well as a range of physical activity opportunities. Organisers are

encouraged to propose events which will allow delegates and guests to experience the culture of the host region. Examples of previous activities include formal dinners, music and dancing, led walks and performing arts performances.

FACILITIES

Sustainability and climate protection

Every HEPA Europe conference is an opportunity to raise greater awareness – among participants, staff and service providers – of the benefits of healthy diets and regular physical activity and of using sustainable practices to protect the environment. We would strongly encourage the host organization to follow principles of health and sustainability and that the choice of location, accommodation, food and beverages, and even the scheduling of the meeting agenda, are based on these principles. Further information and guidance on how to organize sustainable meetings/conferences is available from the [WHO](#) and [elsewhere](#).

Location

The site proposed for the HEPA Europe conference should be located in a readily accessible area, and within easy distance of an international airport which should be served by both public and private transport.

Accommodation

The conference venue should be in close proximity to adequate hotel accommodation. Various facilities differing in price and services should be available.

Venue Facilities

The following facilities are recommended to adequately host the conference.

Opening Ceremony and Plenary Sessions

Seating capacity of up to ~450 delegates with large screen projection capabilities.

Parallel Session Rooms

Facilities should be available that allow for the holding of ~4 concurrent sessions that can accommodate the total number of delegates. Ideally these sessions will take place in relatively equal sized rooms, with careful consideration given to the seating capacity and seating configuration for the types of sessions planned.

Poster Space (if required)

Adequate space for poster sessions (either electronic or hard copy) should be arranged along with the necessary boards for mounting posters (if hard copy format is opted for). The programme and space should allow for ~150 posters across the event.

Registration Space

The registration space should be readily accessible throughout the conference and be of sufficient size and configuration to allow for the smooth registration of all delegates.

Audio-Visual Technical support

Knowledgeable technicians/volunteers should be available to assist speakers in the different rooms.

Speaker-Ready Room

Hosts are invited to consider making one small room available to speakers to prepare and test their multimedia presentations, and to upload presentations to the relevant rooms and sessions. Knowledgeable technicians/volunteers should be available to assist speakers with this task.

Lunch and Break Facilities

There should be adequate eating facilities for lunch during the conference that permit all delegates to eat within a reasonable time period and in a comfortable setting. Beverages should be provided for morning and afternoon breaks.

Information and Communications

A wi-fi internet service should be provided within the Congress venue, and if at all possible, this should be provided free to delegates within the Congress centre.