



CALL FOR HOSTS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING OF HEPA EUROPE 2027

INTRODUCTION

This document provides information for organisations 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 2027. It includes information about the eligibility of host organisation, the procedure and selection process as well as details regarding organisation 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 policymakers.
- 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 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

- 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, 17 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-19 pandemic</i>
2007	Graz, Austria	2014	Zürich, Switzerland	2021	<i>postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic</i>
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, the Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	2018	London, England, United Kingdom	2025	Kaunas, Lithuania

ELIGIBILITY OF THE HOST ORGANISATIONS

The Host Organisation must be a member of HEPA Europe. The Host Organisation may also be an alliance of different organisations (e.g. two universities, a university and a ministry, etc.), provided that at least one of them is a member of HEPA Europe.

It is essential that the aims and objectives of the Host Organisation are consistent with those of HEPA Europe and WHO Europe. It is desirable that the Host Organisation 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 Organisation 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 Organisation 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 2027, institutions interested in hosting the event are kindly invited to submit a written expression of interest by Friday 6th February 2026.

¹ For reports and books of abstracts see HEPA Europe (European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity) [website]. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2026 (<https://www.who.int/europe/groups/hepa-europe-european-network-for-the-promotion-of-health-enhancing-physical-activity>), accessed 18 February 2026).

Submissions are to be made by 6th March 2026 to hepaeurope@who.int

Requirements

Submissions should address the following points:

- Experience of the local organising committee addressing organising international events, health-enhancing physical activity, and involvement in the HEPA Europe network;
- Initial ideas for a conference central theme;
- Preliminary budget including registration fees for delegates, catering, expendables and social activities.
- Support of the hosting institution(s) (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, including the capacity of the venue;
- Description of the accessibility of the venue, including its proximity to an international airport, ease of transfers and travel between the airport and the venue, accessibility for train users, convenience of public transportation, and availability of parking facilities and car-sharing options);
- 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 (please refer to the Sustainability and Climate Action Pledge – Appendix 1).

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 6 pages of text (minimum font size 10).

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

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

After awarding the organisation of the next HEPA conference and annual meeting, an agreement shall be made between the HEPA Europe Steering Committee and the Host Organisation.

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 organisation to advise on conference proposals.
- Appoint a member to serve as a liaison with the Host Organisation, facilitating collaboration and providing guidance on the organisation of the conference
- Liaise with the working groups to determine conference activities.

- Liaise with WHO Europe to determine the EU Physical Activity Focal Point Network requirements.
- Provide onsite support during the conference.
- Work with the host organisation to compile a post-conference report.

The Host Organisation will

- Be responsible for the organisation, administration and all financial aspects of the conference
- Establish an Organising 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 a Scientific Committee (see box below) which will be responsible for the organisation of the scientific programme of the conference.
- Provide onsite support during the conference.
- Work with the HEPA Europe Steering Committee to compile a post conference report.

Organising Committee

Membership of the organising 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. The Organising Committee should ensure a balanced representation with respect to sex, gender, and other social characteristics, such as professional, cultural, or educational background. At least one member of the organising committee should be an Early Career Professional² from the Host Organisation or other local agency. The Early Career Professional will specifically support the HEPA Europe Early Career Section in organising activities for early career delegates. The organising 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 Organisation and can include international members. It is recommended that the Scientific Committee include representatives from research, policy, and practice to ensure a balanced and interdisciplinary perspective. At least two members of the scientific committee will be members of the HEPA Europe Steering committee. The Scientific Committee is responsible for ensuring the scientific quality of the conference. Its main tasks typically include developing the scientific programme, reviewing and selecting submitted abstracts, proposing keynote speakers, and ensuring that the conference content aligns with the conference's objectives. The format of the keynotes, as well as the selection of keynote speakers, should be validated by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should propose at least one keynote speaker. A rigorous evaluation of all submitted abstracts (including symposia) is expected, and appropriate decisions should be made regarding their acceptance and/or allocation or reassignment to a suitable presentation format.

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).

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 organisational reasons and to avoid clashes with other events, the 2027 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, although this would be welcomed.

Website

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

The Host Organisation 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).

The host organisation may use tools used by the host organisation of the preceding conference or tools suggested by the Steering Committee.

Financial terms

The Host Organisation 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 Organisation is encouraged to develop a preliminary budget for the conference, including registration fees for delegates, catering, expendables and social activities. Registration rates for HEPA Europe members should be significantly lower than non-member rates. Reduced rates for students as well as consideration of a one-day registration fee are encouraged. Early bird registration is expected. Efforts should be made to keep the registration fee as low as possible.

The Host Organisation is expected to cover the registration fees, including the conference dinner, for the Steering Committee members.

If not covered by WHO Regional Office for Europe, the Host Organisation is expected to cover the registration fees for the award winners of the preceding conference (up to four winners).

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

Innovative and/or engaging presentation formats are encouraged (e.g. walking scientific sessions, outdoor field presentations, exercise-integrated talks, “Move & Learn” circuit, standing session).

Attention should be given to ensuring a balanced programme in terms of presentation types and themes. Care should also be taken to avoid scheduling clashes between sessions covering similar topics.

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 Organisations 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 Organisation is required to help arrange this 60-minute meeting and venue.

- **HEPA Europe Steering Committee Meeting**

The network may 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 Organisation is asked to help arrange a venue. The meeting could also be held during the dinner time.

- **European Union Physical Activity (EU PA) Focal Points Network Meeting**

The EU PA 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 ~40 people. The Host Organisation is asked to help arrange this meeting and venue in collaboration with the WHO Europe which coordinates the EU PA Focal Points Network.

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

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 Organisation is asked to help arrange this activity in collaboration with the WHO Europe which coordinates the EU PA focal points network. The name and format of the session should be agreed upon with WHO Regional Office for Europe.

- **HEPA Europe Early Career Award**

HEPA Europe believes in the importance of supporting professionals at an early stage in their career to develop their professional identity. An Early Career Award has been established to recognize the contribution of early career professionals. Early career professionals will have the opportunity to enter this competition for scientific/practice excellence. To be eligible, candidates must be the lead author of the submitted abstract and be within five years of receiving their highest academic degree, excluding any periods of maternity or parental leave. They must also be affiliated with an institution that is a registered HEPA Europe member. Only one abstract per candidate will be considered. The abstract submission process and platform should allow for authors to indicate their eligibility and interest in being considered for this award. The abstract evaluation platform should facilitate the evaluation of the candidates. The Award may include a free registration for the next HEPA Europe Conference which is usually covered by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. No more than two awards should be presented.

- **Host Organisation Award**

The Host Organisation is invited to present national and international awards for the best presentations. The abstract evaluation platform should support the assessment of candidates, and the evaluation of presentations during the conference should be conducted fairly and transparently. The Award may include a free registration for the next HEPA Europe Conference. No more than two awards should be presented.

- **Social programme**

The Host Organisation is 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.

- **Working group satellite events**

The Host Organisation is invited to assist in organising satellite events (usually held the day before the conference) at the request of the Working Groups. Such satellite events may accommodate 25 to 50 participants and last up to four hours.

- **National satellite events**

As part of the conference legacy, the Host Organisation is invited to organise a national satellite event, which may be scheduled for the afternoon of the last day of the conference.

- **Conference proceedings**

The Host Organisation is strongly encouraged to publish the conference proceedings in a peer-reviewed national or international scientific journal. Publications must be in English and open access to ensure wide dissemination and accessibility. The publication process should ideally be cost-free or, if costs are unavoidable, kept as limited as possible. All related expenses must be covered by the Host Organisation.

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 Organisation 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. In addition, the Host Organisation is invited to refer to the HEPA Europe Sustainability and Climate Action Pledge (Appendix 1).

Location

The proposed site for the HEPA Europe conference should be situated in a readily accessible location, within convenient distance of an international airport served by both public and private transport. The venue should also be easily accessible for participants traveling by train, bus, or car-sharing.

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 community- and family-oriented nature of HEPA Europe makes a university setting particularly well suited for hosting the conference, and a preference is therefore expressed for such venues over more formal conference or hotel locations. In addition, 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, with the option of finger foods, should be provided for both morning and afternoon breaks.

- **Information and Communications**

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

Appendix 1



CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLEDGE

(KAUNAS, LITHUANIA – SEPTEMBER 2025)

PREAMBLE

The HEPA Europe Network recognizes that climate change and the loss of biodiversity are urgent threats to the health of humans, animals, and the planet. As a network devoted to improving health and well-being through physical activity, we acknowledge our responsibility to minimize our environmental impact and to engage, among other topics, in research on the interconnections between physical activity, climate change, and planetary health and well-being. HEPA Europe strives to lead by example in aligning with the 1.5-degree Celsius goal of the 2015 COP Paris Agreement. Action on increasing planetary health and well-being is integral to promoting sustainable, healthy lives now and for future generations.

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

We, members of the HEPA Europe network, hereby make this formal Climate and Sustainability Action Pledge, committing our organization to ambitious yet achievable actions that support the Paris Agreement, foster climate- and sustainability-related research, and strengthen our advocacy for a healthy planet. In solidarity with the international community's efforts to limit global warming, HEPA Europe pledges to:

CUT HEPA EUROPE'S CO₂ EMISSIONS IN LINE WITH THE PARIS-AGREEMENT

- Reduce carbon emissions from HEPA Europe's activities – especially our conferences, meetings, and events – aligning with the Paris Agreement. This target aligns with global goals, signaling our commitment to doing our fair share.
- Commit to measuring, as data allow, our operational greenhouse gas emissions, and report each year on movement towards a reduction. Our long-term aspiration is to limit our CO₂ emissions as much as possible, reaching near-zero emissions by 2040 or sooner through deep emissions cuts. HEPA Europe will use mitigation measures to lower its carbon footprint only if scientific evidence supports their credibility.

HOST GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

We will transform the way HEPA Europe organizes conferences and meetings to drastically reduce their carbon footprint by:

- Holding events in locations that are easily accessible by low-carbon transport and reducing the need for long-haul flights. We will encourage and incentivize participants to travel by rail, bus, or carpool and avoid air travel when feasible.
- Expanding virtual and hybrid meeting options to reduce travel frequency and provide low-carbon alternatives for members.
- Ensuring that venues and suppliers adhere to robust sustainability criteria, selecting conference venues and hotels with energy-efficient infrastructure, renewable energy use, and strong environmental policies (e.g., waste reduction, recycling) including the circular economy. Ensuring that venues are in walking distance to hotels.
- Making plant-based catering the recommended option at HEPA Europe events, offering healthy vegetarian or vegan menus sourced from local, sustainable producers. This recognizes the high carbon footprint of meat-heavy diets and long supply chains, promoting locally sourced or plant-forward diets to support both climate and health objectives.
- Minimizing food waste by carefully planning portions and donating excess food to local communities, where feasible.
- Eliminating single-use plastics and reducing waste at all HEPA Europe-sponsored events.
- Providing conference materials and programs digitally by default, with any necessary printed materials (name badges, signage), considering the circular economy, made from recycled or reusable materials whenever possible.
- Work with local hosts to prepare a sustainability factsheet for each HEPA conference.

PROMOTE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ON PLANETARY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CONNECTED TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Leverage HEPA Europe's platform to integrate planetary health and well-being into research priorities, education, and advocacy within the physical activity field. We will commit to stimulating and supporting research at the intersection of sustainability and physical activity.
- Ensure that sustainability, planetary health and well-being, and human health are prominently featured in our scientific programs. We will invite abstracts and symposia on topics such as climate change, planetary health and exercise, active transportation and emissions, urban green space, and the co-benefits of physical activity for human and planetary well-being.
- Integrate criteria related to research on physical activity and planetary health and well-being into our award structure. We will recognize early-career investigators who are breaking new ground in exploring how physical activity promotion can contribute to sustainability and climate solutions.
- Encourage energy-efficient research practices. Sending large files burdens email servers and complicates version management. Therefore, collaborative research practices should prioritize cloud-based document sharing to facilitate remote collaboration.

ADVOCATE FOR MORE FUNDING IN RESEARCH ON PLANETARY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CONNECTED TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Advocate for greater investment in research and policies linking physical activity, climate change, planetary health and well-being, and human health.
- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders (including the World Health Organization, the European Commission, national research councils, foundations, and health ministries) to emphasize the importance of planetary health and well-being in funding calls and policy agendas. Our goal is to see more European funding streams (e.g., Horizon Europe research programs) prioritize how physical activity, sport, and exercise intersect with planetary health, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and urban design.

ROADMAP

- Regularly review our climate action progress and update this declaration every five years at a minimum. In 2025, we will finalize this pledge as part of our annual HEPA conference. Thereafter, we will reassess our goals in 2030, 2035, and beyond, strengthening commitments in line with the latest science, innovations, and the global stock take of the Paris Agreement. This would be through actions such as recognizing CO₂ emissions from earlier HEPA conferences, and produce regular progress reports on meeting the Paris Agreement of cutting 50% of CO₂ emissions by 2030.
- Support and advise our members, particularly those interested in hosting annual meetings, in identifying ways to highlight the circular economy, reduce carbon emissions and increase sustainability at these events. This includes recommending low-carbon venues, providing sustainable event planning guidelines, and encouraging best practices in transportation, catering, and waste management.
- Explore and agree the most appropriate governance arrangement (mandate, reporting lines, membership) for a HEPA Europe Sustainability Task Force. Subject to this agreement, the Task Force will monitor progress annually and report on achievements, challenges, and opportunities. We will consider adopting even more ambitious pro-environmental targets for 2035 or advancing the timeline toward near net-zero emissions. If certain strategies prove unfeasible, we will adapt our approach to ensure that significant decarbonization remains on track.
- Engage with peer societies and partner organizations to share tools, coordinate initiatives, and mutually support more climate- and sustainability-friendly operations. This could involve simple shared resources and knowledge-exchange sessions, and—where appropriate—joint working groups or statements.

CONCLUSION

Through this Climate and Sustainability Action Pledge, HEPA Europe commits to embedding sustainability into all aspects of our work, from organizing conferences to promoting research. Our pledge is ambitious but pragmatic—it reflects both the urgency of the climate crisis, awareness of biodiversity loss, encouraging research in this area, and provide practical steps we can take as a network to be part of the solution. By honoring this pledge, climate and sustainability action will be fully integrated into health-enhancing physical activity initiatives across Europe.