

**WHO European Region Member States virtual information session
on the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health
Regulations (2005) (WGIHR), Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB),
and Preparedness 2.0
26 September 2023**

Information document

On 26 September 2023, the WHO Regional Office for Europe hosted an information session on the evolving global and regional architecture for global health security. The session was attended by 39 out of 53 Member States (74%) with 117 representatives¹, four WHO national counterparts and technical focal points², and several representatives of other organizations³.

WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, opened the session and restated the importance of collaborative efforts to make the region safer in the wake of the multiple overlapping crises occurring. Cognisant of the competing priorities of domestic health budgets, he called on Member States to work together in the “last mile” of negotiations for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) and the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR) negotiations at the global level, which can then be complemented by Preparedness 2.0 regionally. He asked for governments to be open about their red lines for negotiation, so middle ground can be found constructively on a range of important issues for keeping the region safe. He also reminded Member States about Preparedness 2.0, the working draft of which will be presented to the 73rd session of the Regional Committee for Europe (RC73) on 24–26 October 2023 in Astana, Kazakhstan, with the next steps to be for comprehensive work to flesh out once the global level processes have been finalised. He ended by reminding the participants of the urgent need to do something, that the next pandemic may be just around the corner, and as a region we have to do better next time.

Head of the WHO Secretariat to INB and IHR Amendments, Dr Jaouad Mahjour, introduced the two processes of the INB and WGIHR. Utilising the analogy of a bird with two wings, he reminded Member States how correlated and interlinked these processes are, and how each is vital to ensuring a safer world from epidemics and pandemics going forward. As an update to the INB process, he welcomed all the work that has been going on for the last two years, notably the most recent informal working groups of the INB to try and find common ground and legal text for negotiation on research and development, access and benefit sharing, supply chain management, prevention and one health, co-development, and transfer technology. It is

¹ 1 from Andorra, 2 Armenia, 1 Austria, 2 Belarus, 2 Belgium, 2 Bulgaria, 2 Croatia, 1 Cyprus, 1 Czechia, 5 Denmark, 4 Estonia, 7 France, 2 Georgia, 5 Germany, 2 Iceland, 8 Ireland, 1 Israel, 3 Italy, 1 Kyrgyzstan, 4 Lithuania, 3 Luxembourg, 3 Malta, 3 Monaco, 4 Netherlands (Kingdom of the), 1 North Macedonia, 1 Norway, 4 Poland, 4 Portugal, 2 Republic of Moldova, 4 Russian Federation, 1 Serbia, 1 Slovakia, 1 Slovenia, 4 Spain, 6 Sweden, 1 Switzerland, 5 Türkiye, 5 Ukraine, and 8 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

² Armenia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, and San Marino.

³ European Commission, European External Action Service, and Regional Economic Integration Organization European Union.

through these informal groups that Member States have grown a greater understanding of each other's positions, and their convergence and divergence. The INB Bureau is now working diligently to produce a negotiation text for October, to then be used for the multiple meetings which will take place between November and March, with the aim of a final text for May 2024.

Amid the WGIHR, there has been informal work going on in relation to some key amendments proposed, including Articles 13a, 44, 44a, 53, and in-depth discussions which have taken place on Articles 4,5,12,8,48 and 15. The WGIHR will meet again at the start of October to continue working, and they are now trying to understand their ultimate timeline, noting the provision in Article 55, stating that amendments must be submitted 4 months in advance of the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA77). He ended by highlighting the political agreements made at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 78) High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Preparedness and Response in mid-September, which will foster greater support for these two governance processes.

The Co-Chair of the INB Bureau, Mr Roland Driec, welcomed the shared ambition he has seen from Member States to make progress on the CA+ and to do so on time amongst discussions at UNGA, the Group of Twenty (G20), and beyond. But he is very aware that this doesn't mean for smooth sailing, noting that the talks on the instrument are as much technical as they are political, and there was a choice by Member States to give the process a very short timeline. The process started with a collection of ideas from all Member States, and from this, they are developing the negotiation text for October. He is cognisant that this text will not make all Member States happy, and that choices will have to be made as some ideas are mutually exclusive. As such, he championed the idea of a Framework instrument, to be allowed to build on ideas in future. Key parts of the instrument, such as financing, access and benefit sharing still remain areas to be discussed and debated, as divisions remain. Finally, he reminded us of the challenges that some Member States have raised in terms of getting such an instrument past domestic political processes (e.g., congresses) but he reminded participants that we have to do what we can, because the previous international instruments that we had during COVID-19 were not enough.

In terms of regional activity, Programme Area Manager for Country Health Emergency Preparedness and IHR (CPI), Dr Ihor Perehinets, elaborated on the current efforts underway within WHO EURO in consultation with Member States to develop Preparedness 2.0, to provide an update to the current emergency preparedness and response strategy for the region which expires this year, and to do so learning from the multiple emergencies the region has faced over the last 5 years, and in alignment with the global level processes such as the INB and WGIHR. This activity will also provide a platform to support Member States with the implementation of these two global instruments. To do so, the first step has been to convene a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), comprised of 17 members, with 9 organisations as observers. There will be an update on the working document of the strategy and action plan at RC73, followed by a period of intense work and significant consultation with Member States, with the final delivery to Member States in October 2024.

Preparedness 2.0 TAG Co-Chair, Dr Gail Carson, then outlined some of the key messages thus far from the group for consideration for the Strategy and Action plan. She flagged the importance of the all-hazards approach, noting that whilst hazards are unavoidable, vulnerabilities can be mitigated, and thus suggested a starting point should be for all Member States to undertake a review of activity during COVID to understand what worked, and what vulnerabilities remain to be addressed. One Health also needs to be central to Preparedness 2.0, with greater collaboration between the human and veterinary sectors. She championed the use of learning from the COVID-19 Transition Plan, to focus on what has and hasn't worked, and working alongside this the TAG have endorsed the use of the Health Emergency Preparedness Response and Resilience Framework (HEPR) as a structure for their recommendations. This includes collaborative surveillance, linking data from all sectors; cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approaches to all efforts; the vital role communities play in preparedness and response efforts; equitable access to countermeasures; and resilient health systems with protection and support for health care workers. She reminded Member States that this is not going to be achieved just within the health ministry, and that these issues will need to be managed and budgeted across the whole of government, if Member States are meaningfully committed to preparing for the next crisis.

Finally, Vice-Chair of the WGIHR Bureau, Ambassador Dr François Rivasseau, updated the group on the efforts to date. This started with a review of all the articles and amendments which had been proposed, so that every state could have their views heard and reflected on. He was cautious about the introduction of some new amendments at this stage, noting that this could cause the process to drag on, and noting the process which was agreed at the start. He also championed the use of informal consultations which have taken place, and hoped to be able to lead to a chairman's text in the not too distant future, but this may come step by step with the less contentious issues being able to be finalised sooner than the more difficult issues. There is also the challenge of working alongside the INB process, and making sure that these processes remain in alignment. However, because the IHR amendment process requires submission to WHA in January (Article 55) this is in tension with INB timelines, and so this is something which needs to be addressed. Yet, he closed confident that the WGIHR is in the beginning of the final process of work.

The session ended with questions from Member States in relation to the role of the Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) initiative, which is part of the broader architecture. The Secretariat explained that the aim of Preparedness 2.0 was to align all of these processes across the landscape and not to duplicate, while also considering on how to ensure that any final text of each process considers the last mile, which all participants agreed was vital.



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5 September 2023
Original: English

Annex 1. Programme

Time	Item	Topic/Activity
11:00–11:15	1	Welcome and opening remarks by • Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, Regional Director for Europe • Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, Regional Emergency Director • Dr Jaouad Mahjour, Head of WHO Secretariat to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) and International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) Amendments
11:15–11:25	2	Updates on the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR) by Ambassador Dr François Rivasseau, WGIHR Vice-Chair
11:25–11:30	3	Q&A on WGIHR moderated by Dr Ihor Perehinets, Programme Area Manager for Country Health Emergency Preparedness and IHR (CPI)
11:30–11:40	4	Updates on Preparedness 2.0 by Dr Gail Carson, Preparedness 2.0 Technical Advisory Group Co-Chair
11:40–11:45	5	Q&A on Preparedness 2.0 moderated by CPI
11:45–11:55	6	Updates on INB by Mr Roland Driece, INB Bureau Co-Chair
11:55–12:00	7	Q&A on INB moderated by CPI
12:00–12:25	8	Q&A moderated by CPI
12:25–12:30	9	Closing remarks and thanks by CPI



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Annex 2. List of participants

Member States

Andorra

Josep Romagosa

Armenia

Gabriel Tepelikyan
Yevgenia Khachatryan

Austria

Barbara Baldauf

Belarus

Alla Dashkevich
Inna Karaban

Belgium

Koen Van Acoleyen
Valérie Dubois

Bulgaria

Kameliya Petrova
Radosveta Filipova

Croatia

Ivana Marinović
Ksenija Krajnović

Cyprus

Elisavet Constantinou

Czechia

Dana Lupacova

Denmark

Katrin Gaard
Laura Jensen
Nanna Svejborg

Nina Dalsgaard
Sofie Kofoed

Estonia

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Jelena Rjabina
Kerli Reintamm
Kärt Sõber

France

César Castelain
Christine Berling
Clément Lazarus
Elsa Desal
François Esmyot
François Rivasseau
Lou Lévy

Georgia

Konstantine Kvatadze
Lela Sulaberidze

Germany

Barbara Lübben
Denise Rabold
Franziska Ofiera
Markus Scherf
Undine Medellin Fanroth

Iceland

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Derval Igoe
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Jessica Condron
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Israel

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Kyrgyzstan

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Tom Moers

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Rita Kamedula-Tomaszewska

Portugal

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