

TERMS OF REFERENCE WHO/EUROPE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

WHO's core mandate is to provide evidence-based guidance to its Member States to support the development of effective public health policies, strengthen health systems and enhance global health security. The credibility of this guidance depends on the scientific rigour, transparency and methodological consistence of the evidence on which it is based. Increasing complexity in health challenges requires interdisciplinary approaches to ensure robust, relevant and actionable evidence.

The Second European Programme of Work 2026–2030 (EPW2) positions technical excellence as core element for future-proofing WHO/Europe, ensuring that its policies, programmes, and partnerships are built upon cutting-edge science, responsive to the evolving needs of Member States and driven by innovation. EPW2 reaffirms the ambition to remain a regional knowledge hub for health and a driver of health system transformation across the Region.

The Scientific Advisory Board (the “SAB”) will act as an advisory body to the WHO/Europe Regional Director to advise on scientific matters, identify knowledge gaps and ensure robust evidence review processes.

I. Functions

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO/Europe, the SAB shall have the following functions:

- **Methodological guidance:** providing expert advice on the methodologies to be used for evidence generation, synthesis, appraisal, validation and grading to ensure they meet high scientific standards.
- **Knowledge gaps:** identifying critical knowledge gaps and methodological risks that may hinder the implementation of regional health priorities and the response to evolving health threats.
- **Knowledge translation and contextualization:** advising on how to translate complex scientific evidence into clear, actionable and feasible policy options that take into account the specific context of diverse Member States.
- **Practical evidence formats:** advising on the development of user-friendly, concise, actionable evidence outputs that are tailored to the needs of policy makers, and communicate uncertainties, feasibility considerations and implications for diverse health system contexts.
- **Capacity-building:** developing recommendations for the responsible use of AI and other digital tools in WHO/Europe's evidence work, for strengthening WHO/Europe's internal capacities across the full evidence-to-policy spectrum.
- **Ad-hoc requests:** responding to scientific and methodological questions that may arise from WHO/Europe's technical work.

II. Composition

1. The SAB shall have up to 10 members¹, who shall serve in their personal capacity, to reflect the multidisciplinary, methodological and contextual expertise relevant to advise on WHO/Europe's evidence work. In the selection of the SAB members, consideration shall be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation, gender and age balance to ensure intergenerational public health leadership.
2. Members of the SAB, including the Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO/Europe following an open call for experts. The Chairperson's functions include the following:
 - to chair the meetings of the SAB;
 - to liaise with the WHO/Europe Secretariat between meetings;
 - to help shape the agenda of meetings;
 - to oversee the formation and coordination of sub-groups.

In appointing a Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation.

3. Members of the SAB shall be appointed to serve for a period of 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment. A Chairperson is eligible for reappointment as a member of the SAB, but is only permitted to serve as Chairperson for one term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO/Europe if WHO/Europe's interest so requires or, as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or letters of appointment. Where a member's appointment is terminated, WHO/Europe may decide to appoint a replacement member.
4. SAB members must respect the impartiality and independence that is required of WHO/Europe. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed members/members shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment, or continuation of their appointment, shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO/Europe Secretariat, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.
5. Following a determination that a proposed member's participation in the SAB would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of the SAB. Their appointment to the SAB is subject to WHO/Europe receiving the countersigned invitation letter and letter of agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, SAB members have an ongoing obligation to inform WHO/Europe of any interests real or perceived that may give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.
6. As contemplated in paragraph II.4 above, WHO/Europe may, from time to time, request SAB members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a SAB meeting or any other SAB-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO/Europe. Where WHO/Europe has made such a request, the SAB member's participation in the SAB activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

¹ Members serve as full participants and partake in the deliberations and the adoption of the recommendations of the meeting in which they are involved.

7. Where a SAB member is invited by WHO/Europe to travel to an in-person SAB meeting, WHO/Europe shall, subject to any conflict of interest determination as set out in paragraph II.6 above, issue a letter of appointment as a temporary adviser and accompanying memorandum of agreement (together 'Temporary Adviser Letter'). WHO/Europe shall not authorize travel by a SAB member, until it receives a countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.
8. SAB members do not receive any remuneration from the Organization for any work related to the SAB. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO/Europe, their travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO/Europe in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

III. Operation

1. The SAB shall normally meet 2 to 3 times each year. However, WHO/Europe may convene additional meetings. SAB meetings may be held in person (at the WHO/Europe Regional Office in Copenhagen or another location, as determined by WHO/Europe) or virtually, via video or teleconference. The working language of the group will be English with no interpretation support.

SAB meetings may be held in open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO/Europe.

- (a) Open sessions: Open sessions shall be convened for the sole purpose of exchanging non-confidential information and views, and may be attended by Observers (as defined in paragraph III.3 below).
 - (b) Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to WHO/Europe shall be restricted to the members of the SAB and essential WHO Secretariat staff.
2. The quorum for SAB meetings shall be two thirds of the members.
3. WHO/Europe may, at its sole discretion, invite external individuals from time to time to attend the open sessions of the SAB, or parts thereof, as "observers". Observers may be invited either in their personal capacity, or as representatives from a governmental institution / intergovernmental organization, or from a non-State actor. WHO/Europe will request observers invited in their personal capacity to complete a declaration of interests form prior to attending a session of the advisory group. Invitations to observers attending as representatives from non-State actors will be subject to WHO/Europe internal due diligence and risk assessment including conflict of interest considerations in accordance with the Framework for engagement with non-State actors (FENSA). Observers invited as representatives may also be requested to complete a confidentiality undertaking. Observers shall normally attend meetings of the SAB at their own expense and be responsible for making all arrangements in that regard.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, observers may be asked to present their personal views and/or the policies of their organization. Observers will not participate in the process of adopting recommendations of the SAB.

4. The SAB may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of the SAB) to work on specific issues. Their deliberations shall normally take place via teleconference or video-conference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply; the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to the SAB for review at one of its meetings.

5. Reports of each meeting shall be submitted by the SAB to the Regional Director for WHO/Europe. All recommendations from the SAB are advisory to WHO/Europe, who retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the SAB.
6. The SAB shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If, in exceptional circumstances, a consensus on a particular issue cannot be reached, minority opinions will be reflected in the meeting report.
7. Active participation is expected from all SAB members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. SAB members may, in advance of SAB meetings, be requested to review meeting materials and to provide their views for consideration by the SAB.
8. SAB members are expected to attend meetings. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, WHO/Europe may end his/her appointment as a member of the SAB.
9. WHO/Europe shall determine the modes of communication by the SAB, including between WHO/Europe and the SAB members, and the SAB members among themselves.
10. SAB members shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the SAB or WHO/Europe to any third party.
11. The SAB will consider the work, activities and recommendations of other scientific and technical bodies within WHO, including Technical Advisory Groups, WHO Collaborating Centres, or the WHO Science Council, ensuring complementarity, coherence and avoiding duplication of efforts.

IV. Secretariat

WHO/Europe shall provide the secretariat for the SAB, including necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO/Europe Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to Observers will be determined by the WHO/Europe Secretariat. The meeting agenda shall include details such as whether a meeting, or part thereof, is closed or open; and whether Observers are permitted to attend.

V. Information and documentation

1. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing SAB related activities shall be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO/Europe and/or parties collaborating with WHO/Europe. In addition, by counter signing the letter of appointment and the accompanying terms and conditions referred to in section II.5 above, SAB members undertake to abide by the confidentiality obligations contained therein and also confirm that any and all rights in the work performed by them in connection with, or as a result of their SAB-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.
2. SAB members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate or use SAB documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.
3. WHO/Europe retains full control over the publication of the reports of the SAB, including deciding whether or not to publish them.