Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis for the WHO European Region

Report of the 13th Meeting
9–10 April 2019
Copenhagen, Denmark
Abstract

The 13th Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis (TAG-TB) for the WHO European Region was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 9–10 April 2019. The objectives of the meeting were to: (i) review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 18th Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis (STAG-TB) and the 12th Meeting of TAG-TB; (ii) to advise on measures to support Member States to end TB under universal health coverage; (iii) to advise on measures to support eligible Member States in reaching and consolidating sustainability of TB prevention and care; and (iv) to advise on a “new” framework for monitoring the implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020 post 2020.

Keywords
TUBERCULOSIS, MEMBER STATES, RECOMMENDATION, TAG-TB, COINFECTION
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### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>HCV</td>
<td>hepatitis C virus</td>
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<td>LTBI</td>
<td>latent tuberculosis infection</td>
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<td>MAF</td>
<td>multisectoral accountability framework</td>
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<td>MDR-TB</td>
<td>multidrug-resistant tuberculosis</td>
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<td>STAG-TB</td>
<td>Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis</td>
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<td>TAG-TB</td>
<td>Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>tuberculosis</td>
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<td>UHC</td>
<td>universal health coverage</td>
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<td>XDR-TB</td>
<td>extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis</td>
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Introduction

The 13th Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis (TAG-TB) for the WHO European Region was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 9–10 April 2019.

The overall objective of TAG-TB is to provide independent review and expert technical opinion in prevention and care of tuberculosis (TB), drug-resistant TB and HIV-associated TB (TB/HIV) to the WHO Regional Director for Europe.

The objectives of the meeting were to:
- review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 18th Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis (STAG-TB) and the 12th Meeting of TAG-TB;
- advise on measures to support Member States to end TB under universal health coverage;
- advise on measures to support eligible Member States in reaching and consolidating sustainability of TB prevention and care;
- advise on a “new” framework for monitoring the implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020 post 2020.

The scope and purpose, programme and the list of participants of the Meeting can be found in annexes 1–3. The Meeting was chaired by the TAG-TB chairperson, Professor Alberto Matteelli, and vice-chairperson, Mr Alexandre Lourenco.

TAG-TB congratulated the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Region Member States on the achievements of the past year. The substantial actions taken by the Regional Office and consequently by Member States have had significant results, with TB incidence rates decreasing across many countries. However, challenges remain: the proportion of multidrug and extensively drug-resistant TB (M/XDR-TB) cases is increasing, numbers of TB/HIV coinfection cases are rising and challenges remain in reforming health-care systems towards ambulatory TB care. These trends all need to be addressed.

Recommendations

This section lists the main recommendations of TAG-TB including, where relevant, reports to be produced for presentation at the 14th TAG-TB meeting in 2020.
General recommendation on work with TB and M/XDR-TB

1. Continue to support Member States in prioritizing and reviewing their national TB strategic plans and facilitate the sharing of plans and experiences between Member States and key stakeholders, including civil society and the TB community.

→ Possible product: internal report

Latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB prevention

The 2018 United Nations General Assembly declaration on TB states the aim to have 30 million people globally on preventive treatment by 2022. In order to achieve this ambitious goal, increased attention needs to be paid to LTBI. TAG-TB therefore recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

2. Continue to work with Member States to include LTBI-related information in national surveillance and monitoring response systems and offer advice on how enhanced surveillance can serve to support prevention of TB at the national level.

3. Together with relevant partners emphasize that LTBI prevention is effective, and encourage Member States to generate evidence on LTBI prevention and share good practice examples.

4. Collect and share with Member States documentation on regional LTBI practices at relevant meetings and workshops in the Region.

→ Possible products: internal report and best practices to be disseminated within the Region

The TB Consilium

TAG-TB believes that the TB Consilium is an essential tool, which should be sustained and further developed. Therefore, TAG-TB recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

5. Continue to work with the relevant partners on the TB Consilium and encourage and support Member States in complementing and strengthening it with national and subnational committees/consilia for managing M/XDR-TB. This should include strengthening and supporting cross-border collaboration among Member States with active TB consilia.

→ Possible product: internal report
Coinfection with TB and hepatitis C virus (HCV)

In line with the United Nations Common Position on Ending HIV, TB and Viral Hepatitis through Intersectoral Collaboration, issues related to coinfection with TB and HCV need to be further addressed. TAG-TB therefore recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

6. Promote and support Member States in aligning with the international WHO recommendation of collecting basic data on TB and HCV coinfection at national level, and for WHO to collect and analyse the data at regional level.

7. Encourage and support Member States in conducting operational research on the incidence of coinfection with TB and HCV and to collect experiences and best practices within the Region.

8. Develop a short policy brief on coinfection with TB and HCV with regards to diagnosis, treatment and care, and share this with Member States and other relevant partners.

→ Possible products: WHO publication on HCV and TB/HCV coinfection in the Region. WHO policy brief on diagnosis, treatment and care of TB/HCV coinfection.

Childhood TB formulations

The availability of new child-friendly TB formulations offers improved treatment options for children with TB. However, within the Region large differences in access to the formulations exist. TAG-TB therefore recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

9. Work with relevant partners to conduct a survey among Member States on the availability and use of child-friendly TB formulations and the barriers to their availability and use.

10. Encourage Member States to make use of adequate procurement systems, such as the Global Drug Facility (GDF), to procure child-friendly TB formulations to ensure low price and high-quality as mentioned in the Political Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on TB.

→ Possible product: scientific publication in a peer-reviewed journal and internal report
TB and universal health coverage (UHC)

WHO’s strategic focus on universal health coverage (UHC) and the upcoming United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on UHC (to be held on 23 September 2019) provide an important opportunity to link TB to the international UHC agenda and to secure continued attention for TB. TAG-TB therefore recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

11. Develop a short policy brief on a prescriptive TB benefit package of services, as part of UHC, highlighting the needs of key populations at risk and guidance on how UHC can embrace them. The policy brief should also underscore the importance of not only individual health, but also of population health from an infectious disease perspective; this could be in line with the blueprint stemming from the Tuberculosis Regional Eastern European and Central Asian Project (TB-REP) and/or support/facilitate updating it.

12. Support Member States in packaging country-specific advocacy material for health and non-health sector stakeholders/ministers in view of the United Nations General Assembly UHC meeting. This could include:
   • a policy brief on basic TB services and UHC;
   • an overview of the relevant commitments made in the declaration of the 2018 United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on TB, which supports the UHC agenda;
   • an overview of the core actions needed to ensure UHC for TB prevention and care at country level, including the key populations at risk.

→ Possible products: policy brief and internal report

Financial sustainability of TB prevention, treatment and care

In view of the ever dwindling (external) donor support/funding, TAG-TB recommends the following:

13. Carry out preparatory work for further integrating TB into relevant medical specialties (e.g. pulmonary medicine, infectious diseases) and promote human resources capacity development as a priority for donors.

14. Collect and share experiences/best practices from Member States in the Region with different financing models and models for transitions.

15. Support transitioning countries to develop contingency plans for the reduction of international funding, to prepare support for community services and civil society and to minimize the impact on patients. This could include supporting countries in implementing
costing tools for TB treatment per patient, linked to treatment outcomes and patient experience.

→ Possible product: internal report

16. Support the development of a framework to promote a sustainable procurement system for Member States, taking into consideration the experiences of existing subregional procurement systems, and encourage the use of the GDF for increased access to high-quality and affordable TB treatment and diagnostics for populations in need (as stipulated in the Political Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on TB).

→ Possible product: sustainable procurement framework

The Multisectoral Accountability Framework

In 2017, WHO and partners initiated the development of a multisectoral accountability framework (MAF), which was further reiterated at the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on TB in September 2018. In the finalized MAF for the European Region, a minimum of new indicators to be collected and reported on are to be defined. To support this process TAG-TB recommends that the WHO Regional Office for Europe undertake the following:

17. Finalize and share the revised data collection list with Member States and develop a template for collecting data for the MAF, thus ensuring that the regional MAF will be harmoniously interlinked with the Sustainable Development Goals.

→ Possible product: revised data collection tool endorsed and in use by Member States

18. Convene a working group to discuss and promote the MAF (and its regional adaptation), with involvement of TAG-TB, engaging relevant partners including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), national counterparts and community organizations.

→ Possible product: Internal report


→ Possible product: updated indicator framework for follow-up on the 2016–2020 TB action plan
Annex 1: Scope and purpose

Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis (TAG-TB)
for the WHO European Region – 13th Meeting

Copenhagen, Denmark, 9–10 April 2019

Scope and purpose

Main objective

To provide independent review and expert technical opinion in prevention and care of tuberculosis (TB), drug-resistant TB and HIV associated TB (TB/HIV) to the WHO Regional Director for Europe.

Specific objectives of the 13th Meeting of TAG-TB

1. To review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 18th Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis (STAG-TB) and the 12th Meeting of TAG-TB.
2. To advise on measures to support Member States to end TB under universal health coverage.
3. To advise on measures to support eligible Member States in reaching and consolidating sustainability of TB prevention and care.
Annex 2: Programme

Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis (TAG-TB) for the WHO European Region – 13th Meeting

Copenhagen, Denmark, 9–10 April 2019

Programme

Day 1: 9 April 2019

12:00–13:30  Registration including light snack/lunch

Session 1:  Introduction

13:30–13:40  Opening
Dr Masoud Dara, Acting Director, Communicable Diseases, Division of Health Emergencies and Communicable Diseases, WHO Regional Office for Europe

13:40–14:00  Review of the terms of reference and membership of TAG-TB; review of the declarations of conflict of interest
Presenter: Dr Martin van den Boom, Technical Officer, Joint Tuberculosis, HIV and Viral Hepatitis Programme (JTH), WHO Regional Office for Europe

14:00–14:30  “What’s next” after UNHLM on TB: Focus on the global perspective
Presenter: Dr Malgorzata Grzemska, Coordinator, Technical Support Coordination, Global Tuberculosis Programme, Communicable Diseases, WHO headquarters

Session 2:  Updates

14:30–15:00  Question and answers, discussion

15:00–15:30  Coffee break
15:30–16:00 Progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the 12th Meeting of TAG-TB, Copenhagen, 19–20 February 2018
Presenter: Dr Martin van den Boom, Technical Officer, JTH

16:00–16:30 Overview of the TB epidemiology in the WHO European Region
Presenter: Dr Giorgi Kuchukhidze, Consultant, JTH

16:30–17:10 Discussion

17:10 Closure of the day

17:15 Reception

**Day 2: 10 April 2019**

**Session 3:** Specific questions to TAG-TB

09:00–09:40 Ending TB under universal health coverage
*Presenters: Dr Martin van den Boom and Ms Vittoria Gemelli (JTH)*
*Discussant: Dr Sarah R Anderson, TAG-TB*

09:40–10:20 Discussion

10:20–10:50 Coffee break

10:50–11:30 Reaching and consolidating (financial) sustainability of TB prevention and care
*Presenters: Dr Martin van den Boom and Dr Sayohat Hasanova (JTH)*
*Discussant: Mr Alexandre Laurenco, TAG-TB*

11:30–12:10 Discussion

12:10–13:30 Group picture and lunch

*Presenter: Dr Andrei Dadu (JTH)*
*Discussant: Professor Alberto Matteelli, TAG-TB*

14:10–14:50 Discussion

14:50–15:20 Coffee break

15:20–17:00 Discussion on the main recommendations of the TAG-TB 13th Meeting
17:00–17:15  Closure of the TAG-TB 13th Meeting
Dr Masoud Dara
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The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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