

# **Selection process for the ECDC Fellowship Programme: EU-track and Member State (MS)-track**

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## Background

The selection of EU- and Member State (MS)-track fellows in the ECDC Fellowship Programme consists of two parts; a pre-selection process and a selection process.

In order to ensure an equal opportunity for Member States to host **EU-track fellows**, ECDC has since 2012, following extensive discussions in the AF and the MB, used a rotation scheme for allocation of fellowship posts to the countries. Following discussions with the stakeholders, the proportion of assigned EPIET and EUPHEM EU-track fellows remained stable in the period 2013-2015 (12 EPIET and 4 EUPHEM) (see Table). Both in 2014 and 2015, the number of available EU-track EPIET posts exceeded the number of MS expressing interest to host an EU-track EPIET fellow. Subsequently, Germany in 2014 and the UK in 2014 and 2015 were given two EU-track EPIET posts.

In 2013, EUPHEM joined the MS-track scheme. The annual distribution of **MS-track fellows** between the two paths has been based on the priorities expressed by the MS. In order to maximise the distribution of MS-track fellows between the MS, a country could have a second fellow only if available MS-track fellowship opportunities exceeded the number of MS interested to have a fellow. MS wanting to have more than one MS-track fellow were thus asked to prioritise between the paths. In the period 2013-2015, the distribution of seats for each path, has varied slightly (+/- 1 fellow in each path) depending on the annual MS priorities (see Table).

**Table. Numbers of fellows by track and path 2012–2016.**

Path-track	Cohort year				Grand Total
	2013	2014	2015	2016	
EPIET-EU	12	12	12	9	45
EUPHEM-EU	4	4	4	7	19
EPIET-MS	7	6	7	12	32
EUPHEM-MS	5	6	5	0	16

For the cohort 2016, 10 MS expressed interest in training 14 EPIET EU-track fellows, 9 MS expressed interest in training 9 EUPHEM EU-track fellows, and no MS had a EUPHEM fellow as their first choice for the MS-track. Following a brief consultation with the MS, the number of EUPHEM EU-track fellows was increased (see Table). For the 2016 cohort, following recommendations from the Internal Audit Service, ECDC also abandoned the step where the country of origin for an applicant to the EU-track had a distinct parallel role in the selection process.

In follow-up discussions with the NFPTs, the AF and the MB, ECDC was asked to come up with a proposal for a more robust system, providing a more stable basis for planning and allowing the AF and NFPTs to give input to the proportion of EPIET and EUPHEM fellows in the two tracks, based on national needs (to be expressed by the NFPTs representing the interest of their countries) and overall EU added value (to be expressed by the AF having a more overarching role and not representing the specific interest of their countries).

Based on inputs from various stakeholders, ECDC launched in September a consultation on a proposal taking into account the views received in the recent discussions, and reflecting also the principle of

needs-based capacity support, endorsed by the Management Board in the new Country Support Strategy.

The consultation included the AF (through three working groups) and the Member States, represented by the NFPTs and the training site representatives in the Training Site Forum (TSF), being operational contact points (OCPs) within the Coordinating Competent Bodies (CCB) framework. The AF was asked to review and provide input to the proposal with a view of the overall EU training needs and how the selection process could best support the role of the Fellowship Programme to capacity building throughout Europe, while the NFPTs and the TSF were asked to provide the perspectives of their respective countries.

The below updated process is based on the outcome of this consultation. While it has not been possible to take all diverging views into account, we have tried to address the majority view. For transparency purposes, all specific comments will be made available on the ECDC extranet.

## Part 1: Pre-selection process

### ***1.1 Expression of interest and allocation of the fellowship posts for EU- and MS-track fellows***

#### **1.1.1 Expression of Interest**

Every year in October or November, ECDC sends an invitation for expression of interest to the NFPTs for training EU- and MS-track fellows in the cohort of the following year. In this invitation, ECDC will ask the MS to propose national training sites interested in training a fellow in the ECDC Fellowship Programme, both the EU-track and the MS-track. This is done by submitting a response form by the deadline stated in the invitation.

In the first allocation round of the fellowship posts for EU- and MS-track for each path, no country will receive more than one seat for each path. Hence, the MS will need to prioritise between EU- and MS-track for each path. This principle is to ensure that the number and geographical range of countries hosting fellows is maximised. At this stage there is no need to prioritise between the paths within the same track.

The MS will inform ECDC about the sites interested in being a training site for the next cohort, as well as how many fellows they are willing and have capacity to train in each of the fellowship paths (EPIET/EUPHEM) and tracks (EU/MS). Note that only acknowledged training sites<sup>1</sup> will be able to train a fellow in the upcoming cohort.

#### **1.1.2 Number and allocation of fellowship posts**

Based on resources available ECDC will each year decide on a total number of fellowship posts and assign them to each track and path using the below principles:

#### **1.1.3 EU-track**

1. Each year a fixed number of EU-track fellowship posts for each path will be assigned, with proportion between the paths based on guidance from the AF and the NFPTs. For planning

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<sup>1</sup> An acknowledged training site is a training site that has a) trained a fellow in the last two years or b) has been visited and approved within the last two years or c) has had a successful training site appraisal (no later than February the year of cohort start). To host an EU-track fellow the site also needs to have a signed Framework Partnership Agreement on Training Fellows in place.

purposes, the proportion will be stable throughout the years, and only change following a new consultation with the AF and the NFPTs. The draft budget for 2017 would indicatively allow for a total of 17 (12 EPIET and 5 EUPHEM) EU-track fellowship posts to be distributed among the Member States.

2. In case the number of fellowship posts for a path exceeds the number of MS having expressed an interest to host a fellow in that path, the remaining posts will be assigned to MS offering to have more than one fellow according to the cumulative historical amount of EU-track fellows of that path that these MS have hosted, ranked from lower to higher counts.
3. The allocation of the fellowship posts for the two paths among the countries are done independently from each other. For each of the paths, priority will be allocated to MS that have not hosted an EU-track fellow in that path in the previous cohort, according to the rotation scheme in place since 2012. Countries that have not been allocated a fellow will be put on waiting list for that cohort, according to their rank in the rotation scheme.
4. If the assigned number of EU-track fellowship posts in either of the two tracks exceeds the number of countries expressing interest to host fellows in that track, the remaining posts will be distributed to countries having expressed interest to train more than one fellow. Priority should then be given to countries that have not been assigned an MS-track fellow in the same path that year, with further prioritisation based on the cumulative number of EU-track fellows in that path trained by the country previous to the current cohort (ranked from lower to higher numbers). When allocating more than one fellow for any particular track to a country, and in case of a tied rank in the rotation scheme, ECDC will consider also the capacity needs of the countries (which countries would benefit most from a fellow during the fellowship).
5. After the assigned fellowship posts for the two paths have been allocated to the MS according to the above criteria, the results including the allocated fellowship posts and waiting list/s will be shared with all the MS.

### 1.1.4 MS-track

1. Member States requesting an MS-track seat are strongly encouraged to identify suitable candidates already by the time of expression of interest.
2. The budget available for the MS-track will vary year by year depending on the total salary cost for the EU-track. The total number of MS-track fellows would therefore be known only once the hosting countries for the EU-track have been identified.
3. Each cohort will have a minimum of 6 EPIET and 4 EUPHEM MS-track fellowship posts, to be distributed among the requesting countries according to their expression of interest of path and priority to receive a fellow according to the present system (priority will be given to MS that have trained the least fellows in the past 4 cohorts and have the least number of alumni in the public health work force, in absolute numbers and per population, and by path).
4. Depending on budget availability a number of additional fellowship posts will be assigned to the path/s based on the proportion of expression of interest for each path. This gives flexibility to distribute resources according to the needs and training capacity expressed by the MS. For Cohort 2017 we anticipate to have a minimum of 2 posts that are not pre-assigned to a specific path.
5. Once the number of EPIET and EUPHEM fellows in the MS-track has been decided, the further allocation of the fellows for the two paths among the countries are done independently from each other. Only in case the assigned minimum of MS-track fellowship posts in either of the two paths exceeds the number of countries expressing interest to train fellows in that path, the remaining posts up to the minimum number will be distributed to Member States having expressed interest to train more than one fellow. In case of a tied rank, ECDC will consider also the capacity needs of the country (which countries would benefit most from a fellow during the fellowship).
6. After the fellowship posts for the two paths have been allocated according to the above criteria, the results including the placements of the fellows and waiting list/s will be shared with all the MS.

The countries which have been allocated fellow/s are invited to, within a given deadline, nominate a candidate for each allocated fellowship post based on an application with a CV and a Letter of Motivation (LoM) of the nominated candidate/s. Eligibility and selection criteria will be the same as for the EU-track. If by the deadline, a country has not submitted a candidate application the post/s will be allocated to the next country on the waiting list.

## Part 2: Selection process

### 2.1 *MS-track*

CV and LoM of candidates nominated by the MS will be reviewed by the EPIET and EUPHEM Head Scientific Coordinators. After eligibility check, the Head Scientific Coordinators will organise a teleconference to interview the candidates for confirmation of their suitability. In case of non-suitability, the nominating country will be invited to nominate another potential fellow. If this fails, the post will be given to the next country on the waiting list.

### 2.2 *EU-track*

#### 2.2.1 Call for Applications

Candidates are selected through an annual Call for Applications, in accordance with the valid Director's Decision. The call will be advertised on the ECDC website, together with all necessary instructions for application and information on the Fellowship programme. Each candidate will be requested to submit a CV and a LoM.

#### 2.2.2 Selection Committees

Two ECDC Selection Committees (one for each of the two paths), appointed every year by the ECDC Director, are responsible for the process of selecting the fellows. The respective Selection Committee includes the Head Scientific Coordinator of the respective path (EPIET or EUPHEM), one frontline scientific coordinator, one representative of the Fellowship Training Site Forum, one representative of the National Focal Points for Training, and one representative of the EPIET Alumni Network (EAN). The Selection Committee will be chaired by the respective Head Scientific Coordinator (may be delegated to another senior staff member within ECDC).

#### 2.2.3 First Round - Eligibility check by ECDC

The ECDC Fellowship Faculty Bureau (FFB) and the Selection Committee members review the CVs, LoM and online registration information of all candidates for eligibility. Non-eligible candidates will be excluded from the further process.

In parallel the FFB sends application documents from candidates to the NFPTs of the EU Member State of origin of the applying candidate for their review.

#### 2.2.4 Second Round – Scoring, ranking, and selection by the Selection Committees with invited input from the NFPTs.

Each Selection Committee member will review and score all applications by a given deadline, based on a list of pre-defined selection criteria.

In order to make a final short list of candidates for face to face interview two steps will be established.

1. Teleconference with the Selection Committee to agree on a **short list for telephone interviews** with candidates (first short list). Each Selection Committee discusses individual applicant's scores during a teleconference and ranks the candidates, taking into account both the scores and the nationality to ensure a wide geographical distribution of the candidates. Top-ranked candidates are

shortlisted and invited for a telephone- or video interview with the Committee. The number of shortlisted candidates will be proportional to the number of available fellowship posts for the respective path in that year.

In parallel the NFPTs of the Member States of citizenship of the candidates are invited to rank the eligible applicants from their countries, with a deadline allowing for the alignment of the results with the establishment of a shortlist for interviews (see section 2.2.4 below). The format of this review is the responsibility of the MS. In case the Selection Committee shortlist contains a candidate that is not the one being ranked as number one by the NFPT of the sending country, the Chair of the Selection Committee will discuss with the respective NFPT, providing the possibility of including both candidates to the telephone interview.

2. **Short list for face to face interviews** (second short list). Following the interviews with the shortlisted candidates, each Selection Committee creates a second shortlist of candidates to be invited to face-to-face interviews (third round) whereby the number of candidates to be invited is again proportional to the number of available fellowship posts for that path. In that invitation the FFB will ask the candidates to provide a ranked list of their preferred training sites. Among the remaining candidates from the first shortlist, the respective Selection Committees decide on a waiting list. In case any of the candidates selected for face-to-face interviews are unable to attend, a replacement will be selected from this waiting list and invited to the face-to-face interviews.

If at any stage of the process it becomes evident that a candidate is ineligible, his/her application will no longer be considered and the candidate will be informed of the rejection.

### 2.2.5 Third Round – Face-to-face Interviews and placement of fellows

After the shortlists for face-to-face interviews have been finalised, the FFB organises face-to-face interviews with the shortlisted candidates and the Selection Committees as a **first step**, and later with the available Training Site representatives as a **second step**.

ECDC will invite as many Training Site representatives from Member States as available fellowship posts for the current cohort and path, and an additional 2-3 Site representatives in case a Member State/Training Site withdraws or no candidate can be placed.

1. **First Step (face-to-face interviews):** During the face-to-face interviews, each Selection Committee interviews and scores the candidates. The Selection Committees rank the candidates and present a final shortlist of candidates that will go on to the second step of the selection process. In this first step, the Selection Committees determine if any of the candidates do not adequately meet the selection criteria for the fellowship programme. These candidates are then informed about the Committees' decision after the first step and do not progress to the second step.
2. **Second Step (Information Market):** In the so-called Information Market, the candidates can meet with the representatives of the identified Training Sites. After this initial meeting round, the candidates will be given opportunity for scheduled individual interviews with Training Site representatives. The FFB will try to pre-slot as many of the candidates' three preferred sites as possible. During the Information Market, candidates will also be able to sign up for interview slots with Training Sites that they haven't previously ranked.

After concluded interviews, both the candidates and the Training Site representatives will rank their preferences. There will be 3 levels of ranking (1-3) for candidates, where 1 represents the preferred site(s). Each candidate can rank more than one Training Site at the same level. Candidates will be able to rank up to 3 Training Sites in each level (1-3). The Training Site

representatives will use the same method for ranking their preferred candidates: up to 3 candidates can be ranked in each level (1-3). Here again, 1 represents the preferred candidate(s).

If a candidate is not willing to go to a specific Training Site he/she **should not score** that Training Site. The same is valid for the Training Site representatives if they do not want to host a specific candidate.

3. **Third Step (Final placement):** After collating all the rankings from candidates and Training Sites, each Selection Committee will map out the matching between the ranking of the candidates and sites. The Selection Committees then assign candidates to Training Sites taking into account the placement preferences expressed by candidates and Training Sites. 1-1 matches between candidate and Training Site have priority over 1-2 and 2-1 matches, and so on. In case of ties, candidates with the highest scores from the First Step will have priority for placement. Candidates that have not been placed with an available Training Site will constitute the waiting list. The preference of the candidate takes precedence over the preference of the Training Site. The Selection Committees produce a report proposing the names of candidates for that year's cohort to the Director. The Director of the ECDC makes the final decision on the selection of candidates based on the placement proposal that results from the Third Step and the reports of the Selection Committees

### 2.2.6 Notifications and acceptance

ECDC notifies successful candidates, with a deadline for accepting or rejecting the offer and confirming the dates of the fellowship period. Candidates who are on the waiting list will also be notified of their status by ECDC. In case a candidate rejects or does not reply to the offer within the deadline, the next suitable candidate in the waiting list will be informed about the possibility to get an offer and will have 48 hours to accept or reject the offer. The final composition of the year's cohort is announced when all parties have accepted their respective offers.