ECDC Fellowship Programme

International assignments
Standard Operating Procedures
ECDC Fellowship Programme/EPIET-associated programmes (EAP)
Version 16 15/07/2019

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Glossary of terms

ToRs	Terms of Reference
MOH	Ministry of Health
PH	Public Health
EPIET	European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training
EUPHEM	European Programme for Public Health Microbiology
EAP	EPIET-Associated Programmes
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
FETP	Field Epidemiology Training Program
WHO	World Health Organization
GOARN	Global Outbreak and Alert Response Network
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontière
POF	Project Opportunity Form
PHT	Public Health Training Section
LoM	Letter of Motivation

1 Background and scope

In the framework of the ECDC Fellowship Programme, an **international assignment** is a short-term deployment of a fellow for field work outside the country of the training site. This document

    a) determines the respective responsibilities of the actors involved in international assignments

    b) describes the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and sets general principles for international assignments.

This document is relevant for:

- Public health institutes/agencies/organisations[1] interested in offering opportunities for international assignments to fellows
- Current fellows
- ECDC fellowship programme Training Site Forum
- Training Site supervisors
- EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP scientific coordinators
- ECDC
- European Commission

It only applies to international assignments under the ECDC Fellowship Programme. Requests for international assignments of EAP fellows are handled directly by EAPs following line with their own procedures.

2 Request for support

2.1 Third parties requesting support

International organizations (WHO, UNHCR, etc.), Ministries of Health (MOH, or their national institutes), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and private organisations (all of there, hereinafter "third parties[2]") might request the support of fellows by sending out a request for assistance or a Project Opportunity Form (POFs)[3] to the ECDC fellowship programme.

The third party sends the Terms of Reference (TORs) to the following address:
EPIETEUPHEM@ecdc.europa.eu
In case of deligation however the final decision on suitability of the IA is with ECDC.
Along with the TOR or POF, a Security Assessment Report related to the location of the deployment should always be provided by the requesting third party. A checklist for third parties is provided in Appendix 2.

ECDC requires from third parties to arrange and cover the following expenses for the fellow:

- Briefing and debriefing at the requesting institution (if needed)
- Daily allowance (per diem)
- Travel and accommodation during the assignment (deployment)
- Personal and equipment insurance during travel and assignment (including medical assistance, medical evacuation and repatriation)

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[1] These include, but are not limited to, international organizations and their branches: ECDC, WHO/GOARN, MSF/Epicentre, UNHCR, International Red Cross, etc.

[2] Even ECDC might invite fellows to participate to international assignements, under the same conditions included in this article.

[3] The POF can be found in Appendix 1

- Visa or other travel documents, including necessary medical check-ups, vaccination and chemoprophylaxis when appropriate
- Financial support for future scientific communication / conference, if relevant

2.2 Role of ECDC/Head of Fellowship Programme

a. The **Head of Fellowship Programme or other coordinator by delegation**, reviews the TORs and decide whether the proposed assignment is suitable for fellows according to the following criteria:
    i) Public health importance and scientific interest
    ii) Added value created by the training opportunities provided by the assignment
    iii) absence of conflicts with the Modules of the ECDC Fellowship Programme or with activities and projects conducted by the fellow in the hosting site of their employment.

b. The **Head of Fellowship Programme**, after reviewing the security assessment report provided by the requesting third party, may issue recommendation in relation to the security risks on the country of deployment. To do so, the Head of Fellowship Programme may - in cases of deployment outside the EU/EEA and when relevant - liaise with ECDC International Relations Section and ask the Commission for a copy of the EC security briefing on the country of deployment.

c. At any stage of the process, the Head of Fellowship Programme is responsible to ensure that the deployment is in adeherence with the ECDC Independence Policy and it does not give rise to potential situations of conflict of interest, or double funding.

d. If the international assignment is considered relevant according to point "a" above, the **Head of Fellowship Programme responsible for international assignments** circulates the finalised TORs and/or POF to:
    i) all the EPIET/EAP/EUPHEM fellows to offer them the opportunity to apply for the assignment or simply inform them,
    ii) all respective Training Site supervisors to inform them of the request,
    iii) all EPIET/EAP/EUPHEM scientific coordinators, and
    iv) the Fellowship Programme Office (FPO).

The request is circulated together with relevant information on the security situation. Fellows' applications are received via ECDC's learning management system/platform EVA within the deadline established by the Head of Fellowship Programme or other coordinator by delegation.

2.3 Role of the Training Site

The Training Site is the employer of the fellow. While ECDC circulates the proposals for international assignment, the Training Site is the ultimate responsible authority approving or rejecting the deployment.

When deciding whether to agree or to refuse the deployment, the Training Site shall take into account the following:

a) any legal obligation applicable to the deployment (including aspects of employment law[4]), or any other constraint, that arise according to any national or international law applicable in the country of the Training Site
b) the security situation in the country of international assignment. As the employer of the fellow, it is the responsibility of the Training Site (TS) to assess whether the deployment and security arrangements made by the requesting third party effectively ensure the safety of the fellow

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[4] For example if a third party offers a temporary employment or consultancy contract to a fellow while the fellow is under contract with the Training Site.

c) whether the fellow is adequately insured during the international assignment, including provisions for medical assistance, and, if needed due to the nature of the assignment, medical evacuation and repatriation

d) whether, in case the fellow has to sign an agreement with the third party requesting the assignment, the provisions of the agreement are compatible with any obligation that the Training Site and the fellow might have towards ECDC[5]

The Training Site will assess the international assignment based on the criteria above, and of any other criteria it might have as employer, and will decide whether to approve the deployment or not.

3 General principles applicable to the assigment

3.1 Duration

The duration of the international assignment may vary depending on the project, it should last 4-6 weeks and under special circumstances last up to 8 weeks regardless of being on site or remote. In the request, the duration of the assignment should take into account not only the duration of the deployment but also the time needed to finalise formal reports.

3.2 Application process for fellows

Interested fellows who want to apply for an international assignment will:
1) Obtain approval from their primary Training Site supervisor, who will take into account the fellow's workload and progress toward completion of the fellowship objectives, commitments at the Training Site
2) Inform their EPIET/EUPHEM frontline coordinator. The frontline coordinator will check if the applying fellow fulfils the requirements for the assignment and if s/he is on track with the training objectives. EAP fellows may also require approval by the programme directors (see section 8 for criteria).
3) By the stated deadline:
   a) submit an updated CV and the LoM;
   b) submit evidence of approval and signed check list (appendix 3) by the training site supervisor.
4) Once selected, fellows shall obtain a second and final approval by the Training Site according to 2.3 above.

Fellows cannot apply directly to the requesting institution, unless otherwise agreed.

Also fellows who are specifically and individually invited to an international assignment, due to their expertise or contacts with the requesting institution, will have to seek approval from their Training Site supervisor, frontline coordinator, and the Head Fellowship Programme or other coordinator by delegation.
A checklist for fellows is provided in Appendix 4.

3.3 Approval criteria

Some general criteria that supervisors and coordinators take into account to approve the fellow's deployment are the following:
- Technical skills and competencies, to be acquired and Progress of the fellow towards achieving the training objectives and how the specific assignment may help him/her meet those
- Technical skills, competencies and specific background/expertise required for the assignment
- Previous international assignments
- Ability to adapt to the specific environment
- Languages spoken
- Availability for the entire expected duration of the assignment

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[5] For example, a confidentiality clause might prevent the fellows to share information with ECDC

In addition, criteria may vary according to the assignment and they are normally specified in the POFs/TORs.

3.4 Selection of fellows

1. Head of Fellowship Programme collect/s all the above-mentioned documents (CVs and LoMs) from the applicants and sends them to the requesting agency.
2. The third party makes the final decision on the selection of the candidates.
3. The Head of Fellowship Programme **responsible for international assignments** informs about the final decision:
    a. all fellows
    b. all scientific coordinators
    c. the FPO
    d. the Head of Public Health Training Section at ECDC
    e. Relevant supervisor/s
4. The Head of Public Health Training Section at ECDC informs the European Commission, of fellows on mission outside of the EU. This task may be delegated if necessary.
5. Successful candidates go through the checklist for fellows (appendix 4) before, during and after the assignment
6. All requests are logged and ECDC keeps a record of all assignments.

3.5 Supervision on the field

Fellows are considered full-fledged professionals in training. The third party will assign a field supervisor who is responsible for the fellow during the assignment and provides on site or "remote" supervision [1]. The **frontline coordinator** or another **assigned coordinator** will also remotely supervise fellows during the whole period of the assignment. The frontline or assigned coordinator will be in contact with the fellow at least once a week during the deployment via e-mail or telephone and will organise a debriefing upon the fellow's return. Assignments that may expose the fellows to specific risks (e.g. complex emergencies) require daily contact with the fellow. These contacts are logged in an international assignments database at the PHT section, ECDC. Fellows are informed of this requirement prior to deployment.

The third party is the ultimate responsible of the security of the fellow during the international assignment.

3.6 Fellows' outputs and feedback from coordinators

In addition to the specific requirements for each assignment, the fellows are expected to provide the following outputs:
*   A **preliminary report,** that is prepared <u>before leaving the field</u>. The fellow sends this report to the supervisor in the field (requesting agency), the **frontline or assigned coordinator,** the **Head of Fellowship Programme** and the **responsible coordinat,** if applicable. The frontline or assigned coordinator will provide feedback within 48 hours.
*   A **final mission report,** which the fellow sends to the requesting agency for comments before finalising, and forwards to the **frontline/assigned**, the **Head of Fellowship Programme,** and the **responsible coordinator,** if applicable, when finalised.

All outputs/deliverables of the assignments are subject to the rules on contributions, authorship, clearance and acknowledgements specified in the Administrative Decision and other technical documents of the ECDC Fellowship, and the TORs of the requesting agency. The requesting agency also has to clear any "Postcards from the field" or similar testimonials, before they are published on the ECDC website. A data use agreement must be signed between the third party (or the Training Site during the assignment) and the ECDC or the EAP, when appropriate.

3.7 International assignments directly organized by the training sites

Occasionally, Training Sites directly organise international assignments for fellows. Procedure to follow is:
*   The training site supervisor and the front-line coordinator (for the ECDC Fellowship Programme EPIET/EUPHEM) check whether the proposed assignment is appropriate for the fellow using the same

criteria as above, considering the suitability and usefulness of the project for the fellow, security issues, and compatibility with ECDC rules, e.g. regarding conflict of interest, double funding, or other.

- The training site covers all the costs of the international assignment including travel and accommodation, daily allowance, travel documents and insurance for the fellow.
- The training site supervisor and the front-line coordinator (for the ECDC Fellowship Programme EPIET/EUPHEM) agree in advance on supervision of the fellow during the deployment and on site.
- EAP-organized international assignments will be in accordance with local procedures.
- EAPs and EPIET/EUPHEM training sites inform the ECDC Fellowship Programme about directly organized international assignments in order for ECDC to approve and keep a record of all requests for assistance (international assignments) directed toward fellows.
- ECDC reserves the right to analyse if there is a risk of conflict of interest, double funding, commercialism or others. In case of doubt, and on a case-by-case basis, ECDC may discuss with the Training Site the situation and propose changes in the assignment, including its cancellation; in particular, if it represents a breach of the conditions established in these standard operation procedures or in the Administrative Decisions establishing the rules for the fellowship.

3.8 Transparency and conflicts of interests

The third party requiring international assignments needs to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Therefore:

- Third parties providing opportunities should disclose the sources of funding that will be used to support the deployment of the fellow(s);
- Opportunities for international assignments, in particular when funded by the private sector, should be assessed by ECDC for potential conflict of interest, double funding and any issues linked to transparency. According to ECDC Independence Policy, ECDC staff cannot receive any payment from the pharmaceutical industry (including expenses for travel and accommodation); this applies as well to EU-track and MS-Track fellows;
- Assignments should also comply with the internal and national rules of the training site where the fellow is employed;
- Publications and reports that follow international assignments should disclose the source of funding that was used to support the fellows.

In most cases, during the assignment, the fellows' salary will continue to be covered by their employer. **EU-track** fellows whose salaries are provided in the context of Grant Agreements between ECDC and the Pulic Health Institute hosting them are not allowed to receive any additional financial compensation (salary/consultancy fee) while receiving a salary from their host Training Site, except for a purely symbolic amont where needed as a condition to sign a contract with the requesting institute.

Appendix 1 – Project opportunity Form

ECDC Fellowship Programme, with field epidemiology (EPIET) and public health microbiology (EUPHEM) Paths **Project opportunity form**	
Title of the project	• Provide a short title for the project
Name, email and affiliation of contact	• Specify who is requesting the project
Location	• Specify where the fellow would have to work (city and country) • If travel to several locations is planned, specify them, the means of travel and the estimated schedule (if available) • In relation to the location of the deployment, provide a Security Assessment Report specifying the security situation in the field and the security arrangements taken by the requesting third party
Project rationale	• Justify the project
Project objective	• Specify what the project should achieve
Methods to use	• Explain the general types of methods that should be used for the project (e.g. analytical epidemiological study, laboratory methods establishment, sero-survey, modelling, surveillance data analysis)
Data / information provided	• Outline the kind of data / information (e.g., database) you could provide for the project
Pre-requisite / background needed	• Specify what skills would be needed for the project (In addition to a mainstream EPIET or EUPHEM background)
Timeline from start to finish	• Estimate the number of weeks that may be needed from the beginning to the end of the project. Specify dates if applicable.
Proportion of time to be assigned to the project	• Estimate the proportion of time that should be assigned to the project during the duration of the project including writing the report/s or other outputs
Description of the output	• Describe what the report should consist in (Body of the output + annexes if applicable) • Mention if this project could lead to a publication
Technical supervision	• Mention who would be available to provide technical guidance, how much supervision would be available and what areas could be covered
Insurance	• Specify how the fellow will be covered in terms of insurance while on assignment
Funding available for	• Travel • Accommodation and per diem • Personal and equipment insurance during travel and assignment (including medical assistance and repatriation)
Funding sources	• What are the sources of funding that will be used to support the deployment of the fellow(s)? • Does EU or ECDC provide any of this funding? (If YES, please specify)
Conflict of interest	• Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (see section 13 of the SOP for International assignments)

Appendix 2 – Checklist for agencies/institutes/ organisations requesting assistance

Request for assistance

1. Send the Terms of Reference (TORs) or POF to the Head of Fellowship Programme, and the responsible coordinator (if delegated) along with a Security Assessment Report.   ☐

2. Agree with the Head of Fellowship Programme, or with the responsible coordinator (if delegated) on the final Terms of Reference (TORs)   ☐

3. Arrange and cover the following expenses for the fellow:

    a. Briefing (including security and health issues) and debriefing opportunity   ☐

    b. Daily allowance (per diem)   ☐

    c. Travel and accommodation during the assignment (deployment)   ☐

    d. Personal and equipment insurance during travel and assignment (including assistance and repatriation)   ☐

    e. Visa or other travel documents, including necessary medical check-ups, vaccination and chemoprophylaxis when appropriate   ☐

Before sending the fellow to the field

4. Select the most appropriate candidate; discuss your decision with the Head of Fellowship Programme or responsible coordinator by deligation   ☐

5. Assign a supervisor for the fellow (on site or "remote")   ☐

6. Arrange   travel, accommodation and insurance of the fellow during the deployment   ☐

7. Provide a security status report to ECDC together with POF

8. Arrange a briefing (including security issues) with the fellow   ☐

9. Provide the fellow with the terms and conditions of the insurance coverage   ☐

While the fellow is in the field

10. Provide communication means in the field including access to e-mails and mobile telephones ☐

11. Establish security standard operating procedures (if applicable)

12. Arrange medical care for the fellow (if needed) ☐

13. Supervise the project and monitor the work plan so that the field assignment can be ☐
    completed as planned

    ☐
14. Continuously provide feedback to scientific outputs delivered by the fellow

    ☐

Upon return

15. Arrange a debriefing ☐

16. Provide feedback to the final mission report and any other scientific outputs delivered by the ☐
    fellow
    ☐

17. Follow up on the psychological/mental health of fellow for possible Post Traumatic Stress

Appendix 3 – Checklist for the employers

Request for assistance

18. Check the Terms of Reference (TORs) or POF provided by requesting organisation ☐

19. Agree with the Head of Fellowship Programme, or with the responsible coordinator (if delegated) on the final Terms of Reference (TORs) ☐

20. Check following important information according to the employers regulation: ☐

    a. Check security and health issues including psychological status ☐

    b. Personal and equipment insurance during travel and assignment (including assistance and repatriation/medical evacuation) ☐

    c. Visa or other travel documents, including necessary medical check-ups, vaccination and chemoprophylaxis when appropriate ☐

Before sending the fellow to the field

21. Select the most appropriate candidate; discuss your decision with the Head of Fellowship Programme, or with the responsible coordinator (if delegated) ☐

22. Assign a supervisor for the fellow (on site or "remote") ☐

23. Review with the fellow the terms and conditions of the insurance coverage and employers rules including security check ☐

Upon return

24. Arrange a debriefing ☐

25. Provide feedback to the final mission report and any other scientific outputs delivered by the fellow ☐

26. Follow up on the psychological/mental health of fellow for possible Post Traumatic Stress ☐

Appendix 4 – Checklist for the fellows

Application

To do before applying: ☐
1. Obtain approval from training site supervisor

2. Inform frontline coordinator (if you are an EPIET or a EUPHEM fellow). Obtain approval from   ☐
   the EAP director (if EAP fellow).

To do when applying:
3. Send to the relevant **Head of Fellowship Programme**, or the responsible coordinator (if
   delegated) (cc supervisor and frontline coordinator), by the stated deadline:
   a. Updated CV   ☐

   b. A Letter of Motivation (LoM) (preferably in the language requested for the assignment) ☐

   c. The approval from the training site supervisor   ☐

In the field

To do before departure: ☐
1. Verify validity of the passport (some countries request validity for at least six months from
   the start of the travel)
                                                                                            ☐
2. Contact the requesting agency/institute/organisation for all travel arrangements

3. Provide the responsible and frontline coordinator with the exact dates of your travel, your   ☐
   contact details (e-mail, telephone) during the deployment and details of a contact person
   (family)

4. Verify validity of necessary immunizations for the specific destination, start malaria   ☐
   prophylaxis (if needed) and check with requesting agency that immunizations, malaria
   prophylaxis and emergency medical kits are available

5. Sign the appropriate insurance documents   ☐

6. Ask the requesting agency for a security briefing   ☐

To do while in the field:
7. Inform the frontline coordinator, the relevant Head of Fellowship Programme or the   ☐
   responsible coordinator (if delegated) and the training supervisor about safe arrival in the
   country of the assignment. Share in-country phone number.

8. Contact regularly the frontline coordinator (by e-mail or telephone, as frequently as agreed, ☐
   and at least as often as recommended in these SOPs)
                                                                                            ☐
9. Strictly comply to health and security rules

10. Prepare a **preliminary report** before leaving the field. Send it to the requesting agency supervisor and the frontline coordinator for comments. ☐

To do upon return:

11. Produce all requested deliverables in time, according to terms of reference ☐

12. Debrief the requesting agency ☐

13. Debrief the frontline coordinator ☐

14. Fill in all necessary justifications for reimbursement of expenses ☐

15. Consult at an early stage relevant health specialists (if needed) ☐

16. Prepare a **final mission report.** Send it to the requesting agency supervisor and the frontline coordinator for comments. ☐

Appendix 5 – Checklist for scientific coordination team

Request for assistance

1. Decide if the mission is appropriate for EPIET/EUPHEM fellows, based on considerations of scope, duration and time (i.e. only public health emergencies and outbreak investigations justify missing one Module) ☐

2. Circulate the project opportunity to the fellows and supervisors ☐

3. Refer suitable candidates to the requesting agency/institute ☐

4. Approve final Terms of Reference (ToRs) with requesting agency/institute before departure of the fellow ☐

Before the fellow leaves to the field

5. Ensure that the fellow meets the requirements and is ready for departure (e.g., insurance coverage, vaccination. See point 3 - requesting agency/institute) ☐

6. Agree who will provide distant supervision (frontline/assigned coordinator) ☐

7. Agree on frequency and method of contact while the fellow is in the field ☐

While the fellow is in the field

8. Keep in touch with the fellow while in the field for:

- Technical supervision ☐

- Security and welfare supervision * ☐

Upon return

9. Debrief the fellows as to share technical and managerial lessons ☐

10. Provide comments and input on the mission report ☐

At all times

11. Maintain an updated log on the status of all international missions ☐

*The regularity and methods for contact will depend on the context and will be agreed before fellow's departure. In case of serious circumstances, the scientific coordination team require daily contacts with the fellow.