

**Terms of Reference**



Food and waterborne diseases and zoonoses

Expert Exchange Programme for public health experts (FWDEEP)

Overview of Food- and waterborne diseases and zoonoses Expert Exchange Programme

One of the key activities at ECDC in the area of food- and waterborne diseases and zoonoses is capacity building in the countries, particularly in the national public health reference laboratories and public health institutes in the EU/EEA. Since starting in 2015, the Food- and Waterborne and Zoonoses Expert Exchange Programme (FWDEEP) has provided a flexible platform to support *ad hoc* learning opportunities for public health experts working with food- and waterborne diseases and zoonoses, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and Legionnaires’ disease at the national, regional or local level. The flexibility is entailed in the applicant’s responsibility to identify the host institution and then between themselves to determine the precise topic(s) and work agenda. The applicant may be a trainer or a trainee in respect to the exchange at the host institution. As such, the FWDEEP is continuously “open” to applications, with all information available on the ECDC website.

The FWDEEP entails an exchange of expertise through the placement of a professional from one public health laboratory or public health institute at national, regional or local level to another public health laboratory or public health institute in the EU/EEA. An expert spends a designated time period (two to five days) at a selected hosting site based on an integrated on-the-job training principle. The applicant must provide written support from the relevant National Focal Point (NFP) or National Coordinator (NC) of his/her country, as well as a formal acceptance by the hosting site. ECDC will then organise and cover the logistical costs of the visit, as well as provide the applicant with a per diem, all pending the success of the application and subsequent budgetary approval. No direct compensation will be given to hosting sites.

Each visit should be organised around one or a few specific topic(s), which are identifiable as gaps or problems in the applicant’s home country (trainee applicant) or at the host institution (trainer applicant). The successful applicant and host institution in case of trouble-shooting support are expected to cascade newly gained knowledge to their colleagues with the desired effect of significantly improving competence in the topic areas.

At the end of the visit, the expert is expected to submit a short report of the exchange, as per the FWDEEP report template. This report will summarise the experience, outlining its scope and topics and detailing the outcomes and skills that were acquired, problems that were addressed; thereby highlighting how the knowledge and learning objectives were met. It will conclude by explaining how the skills and knowledge gained through the exchange will be incorporated into the relevant institution(s) in the Member State.

General criteria for experts to participate in FWDEEP

The FWDEEP is open to all technical experts working in an EU/EEA public health institute or laboratory at the national, regional or local level but the applicant must provide written support from the relevant National Focal Point (NFP) or National Coordinator (NC) of his/her country.

The host institute of the exchange must be a Member State’s public health entity, for instance a public health institute or a public health laboratory. A free-format formal acceptance by the hosting site is needed.

The area of expertise of the selected expert should include one or more of the diseases covered by the ECDC Food- and Waterborne diseases and Zoonoses mandate[[1]](#footnote-1), namely:

*anthrax, botulism, brucellosis, campylobacteriosis, cholera, cryptosporidiosis, echinococcosis, giardiasis, hepatitis A, Legionnaires’ disease, leptospirosis, listeriosis, salmonellosis, shigellosis, toxoplasmosis, trichinellosis, tularaemia, typhoid and paratyphoid fever, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, Shiga toxin/verocytotoxin -producing Escherichia coli infection (STEC/VTEC), and yersiniosis.*

Professional profiles of applicants may include: epidemiologist, microbiologist, laboratory technician, bioinformatician, quality assurance expert or any other public health expert fulfilling the national interest for capability building.

The selected expert should have a good command of English and a plan to cascade the knowledge acquired within their institute or Member State (trainee application) or the host institution should have a plan to implement knowledge and skills gained (trainer application) in order to improve the diagnostic or surveillance capacity at a local, regional or national level.

The minimum time between the application submission to ECDC and the placement beginning is 2 months. Ideally, the placement should take place in the same calendar year as the application is made. In the case that placements can only take place in January or February, more time is needed to organise it and applications must be received by 01 October the previous year.

Content and learning objectives

The **scope** of the training may include, but is not limited to the following topics:

* diagnostics, confirmation and further characterisation of isolates or directly from clinical samples, including molecular typing and sequence-based methods;
* quality assurance, troubleshooting in a laboratory;
* outbreak investigation and management.

The foreseen **learning objectives** are:

* to facilitate harmonisation and sharing of good laboratory practices across the EU/EEA;
* to encourage mutual learning and networking within the EU/EEA;
* to improve countries national, regional or local capacity and competence to diagnose and identify the organisms causing the diseases, particularly as part of surveillance;
* to respond to outbreaks/clusters and apply relevant methods for the outbreak investigation.

The **knowledge objectives** are:

To understand the principles and technical challenges in performing diagnostic and molecular typing methods (detection, confirmation, and further characterisation) currently available for diagnostics;

* to understand the relevant epidemiological methods and how they interact with the laboratory results;
* to understand the quality assurance principles and processes in a laboratory, including requirements for accreditation;
* to understand the multidisciplinary dimension of FWD diseases, Legionnaires' disease included, outbreak investigation, management and prevention.

The **skills** to be acquired could promote national competence through:

* improved ability to carry out selected diagnostic and characterisation technique/s, including molecular typing methodologies and subsequently improved surveillance;
* ability to develop and/or implement a quality assurance system in the laboratory, supporting the activities towards accreditation;
* ability to perform laboratory investigations in a Legionnaires’ disease cluster or foodborne outbreak situation;
* ability to conduct outbreak investigations.

**Identification of hosting site**

The identification of hosting sites will be via free match, whereby the applicant identifies a suitable institute or vice versa. A host site must be willing to place the expert for a period, normally not longer than one working week (five days) and be capable of providing the expert with necessary collaboration support by one or more on-site staff member to provide training or be trained. No direct compensation is available for hosting sites. In case a previous hosting site wishes to send an expert for a visit, it will be taken into consideration in the selection process.

The proposed host site must:

* Be a public health institute or laboratory in the public sector based in one EU/EEA Member State;
* Work in the field of activity that includes food- and waterborne and zoonoses, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or Legionnaire’s diseases; and
* Be willing to provide mentorship to a trainee or host an expert trainer and identify a contact point for the purpose of the exchange.

Selection process

Candidates will be selected on the basis of their application, which will be evaluated in accordance with the Terms of Reference, the general criteria and the content and learning objectives set out within. The application will be weighted according to the points allocated to the criteria in the application form.

**Overview of application steps**

1. The trainee applicant identifies a gap in knowledge or capacity in his/her field that he/she would like to address through the placement; or, a host institution identifies a gap that can be best addressed by a trainer visiting the host institution;

2. The applicant agrees the visit and the dates with the host institution;

3. The applicant completes and submits the [application form](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/fwd-expert-exchange-programme-application-form) to fwd@ecdc.europa.eu.

**The application must include the following documentation:**

1. The completed application form;
2. Evidence of support from the relevant NFP or NC;
3. Acknowledgement and agreement from hosting institute, including dates;
4. The draft agenda for the duration of the visit.

4. ECDC will review and either approve, reject or ask for further clarification on the application. A reply should be sent to the applicant within 10 working days.

5. If successful, ECDC will send an official invitation, organize flights and accommodation for the attendee. A per diem will also be paid to cover costs such as local transport and meals.

6. If unsuccessful, ECDC will provide feedback on the application. The applicant is free to re-apply.

1. List of infectious diseases under EU-wide surveillance: <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/surveillance-and-disease-data/eu-case-definitions> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)