

Scientific Committee: Terms of Reference

Background

The European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE) is an annual conference paid for and organised by ECDC. The Conference aims at:

- (a) Sharing of scientific knowledge and experience in all areas applied to infectious disease epidemiology, public health microbiology and related scientific fields;
- (b) Discussing and debating scientific advances and current public health challenges;
- (c) Strengthening and expanding the human network of all involved in this field in Europe and globally;
- (d) Providing opportunities for further professional development for fellows and students in this field, e.g. EPIET, EUPHEM, FETP and other national/international training programmes.

The Conference is based on the following principles:

- (e) Applying and promoting scientific independence and integrity;
- (f) Delivering EU added value;
- (g) Strengthening stakeholder relationships;
- (h) Showcasing scientific leadership and innovation; and
- (i) Maintaining high social and community values, i.e. inclusivity, equality and respect.

To support the organisation of the Conference, ECDC is collaborating with EAN (EPIET Alumni Network) and TEPHINET (Training programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Interventions Network) Europe.

The Conference has evolved from the Scientific Seminars held each year to give the EPIET fellows the opportunity to present their work in a scientific conference style. As the quantity and quality of the presentations and posters increased over time, it was decided to transform this event into a scientific conference which is open to the wider community of communicable disease epidemiologists. In 2007, the Conference was given its current name (ESCAIDE) and the management was taken over by ECDC.

The scientific content of the Conference, primarily consists of plenary sessions, parallel and poster sessions. The content of the parallel and poster sessions are determined through a scientifically independent process. These are made up of submitted abstracts, selected on the basis of assessment by three different independent reviewers. The reviewers are selected based on scientific expertise and lack of conflicting interests. The body which oversees this process and proposes the plenary sessions is the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee.

The organisation of ESCAIDE is formalised in Director's Decision ECDC/AD/2016/25, dated 19 December 2016.

The aim of this document is to define the composition and responsibilities of the Scientific Committee.

ESCAIDE Scientific Committee: Composition & mandate

1. Members of the Committee shall be appointed by ECDC Director on the basis of their scientific experience and contributions to the field of infectious disease prevention and control.
2. External experts are appointed in their personal capacity and not as representatives of third parties.
3. Members may include experts proposed by EAN, TEPHINET, etc.
4. The members shall be selected to represent the fields of expertise which ESCAIDE covers
5. Internal experts (ECDC) are appointed as representatives of ECDC (otherwise the work with ESCAIDE should be documented as outside activity).
6. The representation of ECDC in the Committee shall not exceed 50%. The Composition of the SC shall not exceed 10 members, excluding the Chair.
7. Members shall be appointed for a three-year period, i.e. for three ESCAIDE. Appointment is envisioned to be done on an annual rolling basis, i.e. exchanging one third of the Committee at a time (meaning either three or four members, depending on the year), in order to ensure business continuity.
8. The appointments should be concluded within a month after the Conference of the respective year and approximately one year before the next Conference dates.
9. The renewal process will take place as follows:
10. A first Committee in line with the terms established in the Director's Decision ECDC/AD/2016/25, is to be appointed after the 2016 conference has ended. The table below illustrates its composition and the renewal process until 2023, however the principle is to be applied for further Conferences.

| Visualisation on the composition of the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee (SC) and its renewal process (until 2023) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | ESCAIDE Scientific Committee Members | | | | | | |
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2016 (part of the SC for the ESCAIDE 2016) | 7 | 4 | | | | | |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2016 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | | | |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2017 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2018 | | | 4 | 4 | 4 | | |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2019 | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2020 | | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2021 | | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| Appointed after ESCAIDE 2022 | | | | | | | 3 |
| Total members of Committee: | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |

11. The Scientific Committee established after the end of the 2016 Conference is composed of seven members of the Scientific Committee from 2016 (three of which have a mandate of one year, four of which have a mandate of two years) and three new members (with a mandate for three years). After the end of 2017 Conference, three of the seven members of the previous Committee shall be replaced with new members. These three members to leave the Committee after one year shall preferably be determined on a voluntary basis. If less than three volunteers, the Chair of the Committee shall suggest a method to determine the other members to leave the Committee (e.g. drawing lots). After the end of 2018 Conference, the remaining four of the seven members of the previous Committee shall be replaced with new members. After the end of the 2019 Conference, the three new members who joined in 2017 shall be replaced with new members. The rotational system will continue with a 3/4/3 turnover.
12. If the position of a Committee member falls vacant, the ECDC Director shall, upon suggestion by the Chair, appoint a new member for the remainder of the term of that position.
13. No deputising function is envisioned. If a member fails to attend over 30% of the meetings and teleconferences and does not complete the tasks indicated below, he/she will be asked by the Chair to step down. In such case, the Chair will propose to the Director other suitable candidates for SC members.
14. Within their mandate, members of the SC shall adhere to appropriate levels of confidentiality with respect to the information, documents and the work performed in relation to their role in the SC. Any failure in respecting this provision would lead to their exclusion from the Committee.

ESCAIDE Scientific Committee: Responsibilities

Members of the Committee provide advice and direction to the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee Chair and contribute to the scientific programme development.

The main tasks of the Committee members are:

15. Provide direction and guide the development of the scientific programme to ensure that ESCAIDE's content is relevant, interesting, balanced, meets the objectives of the Conference and is in line with the feedback of the participants, through the following actions:
 - Propose topics and speakers for plenary sessions;
 - Moderate selected plenary or abstract-based sessions and engage leading experts in the field to present and/or participate in the Conference;
 - Advise on the overall programme outline, e.g. start-end time, duration of sessions, etc.
 - Propose initiatives to enhance the quality and diversity of the programme in line with the underlying aims and objectives of ESCAIDE;
 - Advise the Chair on the Conference timelines, including duration and timing of the main call for abstracts, etc.
 - Bring feedback on the Conference to the Committee and the Chair
16. Oversee the call for abstracts and subsequent review and selection of abstracts for inclusion in the Conference programme, through the following actions:
 - Review annually the criteria for assessing and selecting submitted abstracts and propose changes to enhance quality and transparency if needed;
 - Propose and advise on the profile of the ESCAIDE reviewers;
 - Oversee the abstract review and selection process to ensure that the process is independent and equitable, and based on clear pre-defined scientific objectives;
 - Act as a reviewer for abstracts, including rapid review of standard & late breaker abstracts;
 - Review the guidelines for presenters and poster authors, etc.
17. Act as an advocate for the ESCAIDE, and promote it among colleagues and peers, through the following actions:
 - Disseminate information on ESCAIDE's call for abstracts within his/her professional network;
 - Share and promote ESCAIDE's web and social media materials and communications.
18. Provide a declaration of interest according to ECDC's Independence Policy and inform the Chair immediately should any changes occur, which might present a potential conflict of interest;
19. General obligation to act in 'good faith' at all times, and pursue actions that are in the interests of ESCAIDE in a timely fashion and in accordance with the deadlines given by the Chair;
20. Inform the Chair immediately should he/she be unable to perform these tasks as a SC member;
21. Provide feedback to the Chair on his/her experience of being a member of the ESCAIDE SC; and
22. Follow the Conference principles listed above.

Main tasks of the Chair

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the ESCAIDE SC to:

23. Be an active member of the Committee as per the tasks listed above;
24. Chair all meetings of the Committee ensuring a respectful and inclusive work environment;
25. Propose and approve agenda and documents to be discussed by the Scientific Committee;
26. Ensure that the Committee members are well informed of the objectives of ESCAIDE, key deliverables, timelines and their own roles and responsibilities;
27. Ensure that the key principles of ESCAIDE are being upheld to the highest standard by the Scientific Committee;
28. Seek to build consensus among the Committee members on questions related to ESCAIDE's scientific programme;
29. Serve as an advocate and promoter of ESCAIDE;
30. Participate actively in the engagement of speakers, reviewers and delegates at the Conference;
31. Proactively seek, build and maintain positive relationship with key stakeholders, e.g. ECDC Advisory Forum. Inform them on progress, seek their feedback and input on the programme;
32. Work closely with the Project Manager of ESCAIDE to ensure effective coordination between the work of the Scientific Committee and the organisation of the conference, to ensure that tasks assigned to the Scientific Committee, in relation to the project plan, are completed within the context of these terms of reference;
33. Proactively identify and report project issues and risks and participate in their resolution;
34. Identify and report requests for change to the Scientific Committee, Project manager or ECDC Director, as applicable;
35. Identify and propose new members of the Scientific Committee to the ECDC Director as needed, ensuring suitable expertise, age-, gender- and geographical balance. The Committee members shall be proposed taking into account the Conference vision, objectives, target audience and key stakeholders;
36. Identify leading groups within the field of interest and communicate these to the Project Manager;
37. Liaise with the Project Manager and the ECDC Director on the opening and closing of the conference and key messages to be conveyed; as well as side events, i.e. workshops, symposia and similar, which are organised by third parties and take place before or after ESCAIDE.

ECDC Director: roles and responsibilities

The ECDC Director carries the ultimate responsibility for ESCAIDE as the Conference is an ECDC activity. The main responsibilities of the Director in relation to ESCAIDE are:

38. Takes decisions on matters for which the Scientific Committee cannot reach consensus;
39. Appoints the Chair for a mandate of four years and all members of the Scientific Committee for a mandate of three years, as specified in the Director's Decision ECDC/AD/2016/25. Since the

Conference is funded and organised by ECDC, it is preferable that the Chair is an ECDC staff member.

40. Reviews and approves the plenary sessions of the Conference, including proposed invited speakers; and motivate any objections to proposed topics and/or speakers;
41. Acts as an advocate for ESCAIDE, and promotes it among stakeholders, colleagues and peers, through the following actions;
42. Assists in liaison with local authorities to ensure good hosting opportunities for ESCAIDE.

Hosting country experts

The ECDC Director may invite experts from the hosting country of ESCAIDE to contribute to the organisation of the Conference. Such contribution is limited to the social events of the Conference as well as side events, i.e. those taking place before/after the Conference. These experts will work closely with the Project manager and the Chair of the Scientific Committee but will not be members of the Committee.

Working methodology

43. The Scientific Committee works via face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and electronic communication.
44. Decisions are taken by consensus or, where needed, using majority voting. Should no consensus be reached, the Chair has the decisive vote. If needed, the Chair could ask the Director to take a decision.
45. The minimum quorum for a Committee meeting is at least six members, of which at least three are externals.

Acceptance and Amendment of Terms of Reference

Acceptance of membership into the Scientific Committee indicates implicit agreement with the outlined responsibilities. Amendment of these terms of reference can be proposed by the Chair of the SC to the ECDC Director for his/her approval.