

Public Health Guidance

**ECDC Public Health Guidance**

ECDC guidance aims at supporting decision-making processes at Community and Member State level with respect to public health measures for prevention and control of communicable diseases by setting out evidence-based options for action. ECDC guidance should be based on a systematic and transparent collection and critical appraisal of the best available evidence. The method of choice is the systematic review. Depending on the scope and complexity of the planned guidance several systematic reviews may be necessary to cover all relevant aspects. If needed and appropriate, additional means of evidence collection e.g. surveys, mathematical modelling and others can be applied to complement the evidence collection, depending on the exact questions addressed by the guidance.

The ECDC guidance template is based on the AGREE II instrument (<http://www.agreetrust.org/>), and aims at supporting the ECDC expert and project manager in delivering a structured report. It can also be sent to contractors when the guidance development is outsourced.

**ECDC** SCIENTIFIC ADVICE ‘Public Health Guidance on …’ is the name that will appear on the frontpage of the document.

When **commissioning** the development of a public health guidance or parts of it, it may be helpful to use the templates for public health guidance and systematic reviews as checklists when drafting the tender specifications. The templates can also be attached to the tender specifications to further help the potential contractors in understanding what actually is expected. Pdf-versions have been created for this purpose. Please contact [css@ecdc.europa.eu](mailto:css@ecdc.europa.eu).

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*Template drafted by Helena de Carvalho Gomes, Scientific Advice Coordination Section (SACS), Office of the Chief Scientist, ECDC, Version April 2015. In case of questions or comments related to this template please contact* [*css@ecdc.europa.eu*](mailto:css@ecdc.europa.eu)*.*

**Using this Word template**

This template has been set up with the styles and structure you need so you can just start typing. The styles have been formatted to match ECDC’s publication template and added to the ‘quick styles’ menu at the top right of your ‘home’ tab. Just click on the relevant style in the menu to change your text. Avoid manually formatting text or using the ‘format painter’. This will save you time and ensure a smooth conversion to the final publication templates used by the editors. If you have any uncertainty about using styles, don’t hesitate to contact someone from the Publications Group at ECDC.

**NOTE:** The <Headings 1> of the main chapters included in this template should not be changed in order to keep a consistent structure of all ECDC Systematic Reviews. Sub-headings <Heading 2>, <Heading 3>, <Heading 4> can be used whenever appropriate to help structure the main chapters and make them more reader-friendly, especially in case of complex topics.

**<Heading 1>**

**<Heading 2>**

**<Heading 3>**

***<Heading 4>***

* Text is ‘Normal’.
* Text is still Normal even if it’s in a list
* Just hit the bullet list button
* Or use the style ‘list paragraph’

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styles, don’t hesitate to contact someone from the Publications Group at ECDC.

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**Using figures and tables**

##### Figure 1. Title <Heading 5, Tabs & Figs>



###### Add information on the source and any notes <Heading 6, caption>

TIP: ensure the image is ‘in line with text’. To check, right slick on it and select ‘wrap text’. Choose ‘in line with text’. This will make sure your picture (or graph or text box) moves with the text as things are inserted or deleted.

##### Table 1. Title <Heading 5, Tabs & Figs>

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| Column head | Column head | Column head | Column head | Column head |
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| Row 4 |  |  |  |  |
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###### Add information on the source and any notes <Heading 6, caption>

The style for the ECDC table has been saved as a table style. Click anywhere in the table to bring up the ‘table tools’ tabs. Go to ‘Design’ and choose the first option. It will say ‘ECDC table’ if you hover over it.

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Title

**The title should make clear what the report covers.**

* Use specific keywords and topics.
* It should be clear to any user who comes across the report.
* It should be short, concise and ideally under 65 characters (with spaces).
* Front-load keywords and use colons to break up longer titles.
* Subtitles can be used to further elaborate scope and context

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# Contents

**The contents list should be automatically updated:**

Right click anywhere on the contents list and choose ‘update field’.

TIP: if some text appears that should not be there or a heading is missing, this shows you have not used the correct style in the document. Correct it where it appears in the document and ‘update field’ again.

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# Abbreviations

Text

# Glossary

Text. Delete glossary if not applicable.

# Executive summary

Content: An executive summary provides an overview of what the guidance is about. It should be clear, concise and self-sufficient – and should make sense even for those who do not have time to read the full report. From it, readers should be able to understand the main points of the guidance and how the authors arrived at them. It should also be appealing to the readership, encouraging those wanting more detailed information to read the full report.

Note that the executive summary will be the section used for the website as an entry point for the reader.

* First paragraphs to be strong opening and contain the headline messages: the what, why and when.
* 800 words/5000 characters maximum limit.
* Outline in short the scope and methods, as well as main results and conclusions and the possible implications for public health practice.
* Write it after the main body of the report is complete and revisit it several times before finalising.
* References are usually not included and abbreviations should be avoided.
* Sub-headings can also be used (Objectives; Methods in short; Results in short; Possible implications; Conclusions and possible implications for public health practice and/or research).

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# Introduction

**Content:** This chapter describes the rationale and the identified need for the public health guidance taking the European context into account. The objectives, target audience, areas covered and questions addressed during the guidance development process are clearly stated. Value statements should be avoided. The use of sub-headings can be useful to structure the chapter and make it more reader friendly.

**Length:** Maximum 1000 words (approx. two pages)

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# Background

**Content:** The background chapter introduces the topic covered by the guidance. It should provide enough information with regard to the condition and public health options addressed by the guidance to enable the (expert) reader to follow the authors’ rationale as well as choices made with regards to the specific questions addressed, steps taken and methods applied by the guidance developers. Value statements should be avoided. The use of sub-headings can be useful to structure the chapter and make it more reader friendly.

**Length:** Maximum 2000 words (approx. four pages)

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# Guidance development

**Content:** This chapter describes the steps taken to develop the guidance, e.g. composition and selection of the expert panel, systematic reviews, surveys and studies used or performed for the purpose of the guidance to address specific questions that were considered relevant. The methods used by the panel to collect and critically appraise the identified evidence and to reach conclusions (e.g. Delphi) should be described in a concise way. Sub-headings may be useful to make the chapter more reader friendly. Equally, detailed information on the steps taken and methods applied by the guidance developers should be included in Annexes or appendices in order to not overburden the main body text of the guidance document. Systematic reviews (see ECDC Systematic Review) and other relevant work performed for the purpose of the guidance should, whenever possible, be published as standalone documents and referenced accordingly.

**Length:** Maximum 2000 words (approx. four pages)

Cross references to appendices and references to supplementary documents

* Methods of evidence collection, appraisal and synthesis
* Ad hoc expert panel
* Systematic reviews

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# Conclusions

**Content:** This chapter summarizes the possible options (public health measures) to prevent and control the communicable disease(s) of interest that have been thoroughly assessed during the guidance development process. It discusses the evidence that led to the conclusions with regards to each of the options given. It provides a short summary and discussion of the evidence with regards to potential harms and benefits of each option and the strength of the conclusions or confidence of the panel in the evidence. The link between the summarized evidence and the options given or suggestions made should be clear. Areas of uncertainty or contradicting interpretation of the evidence as well as limitations of the guidance, both at the level of the identified and included evidence (e.g. quality and risk of bias of the included records) and at guidance-level (i.e. limitations of the applied guidance development process and methods) should be clearly stated. Narrative text should be complemented by tables and figures whenever appropriate. Consider the use of evidence tables or evidence profiles to summarise the results by option and outcome of interest. Appropriate sub-headings should be used to structure the chapter.

**Length:** Maximum 10,000 words (approx. 20 pages)

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# Possible implications for public health practice and research

**Content:** Relevance and potential implications for key target groups affected by the panel’s conclusions should be addressed, including ethical, social and organisational aspects, taking into consideration European diversity. Potential policy, operational and cost barriers for implementation should be discussed. Any additional information sources used (e.g. case studies; single country experience based on non-published, personal information) need be clearly referenced. Remaining knowledge gaps and suggestions for future research should be provided.

**Length:** Maximum 2,500 words (approx. five pages)

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# Next steps

Describe the procedure to monitor the validity of the guidance, especially if the guidance identified relevant knowledge gaps and areas of inconclusive evidence. Taking into consideration still ongoing or planned research or developments (e.g. change of case definitions, diagnostic procedures) a time estimate should be included when the guidance will most probably need an update.

**Length:** Maximum 500 words (approx. one page).

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# References

Complete bibliographic list of all the records used for the guidance and/or cited in the document.

ECDC uses the Vancouver system, ie numbered consecutively in order of appearance in the text and listed here in numerical order. Each reference is only listed once. Numbers should be in square brackets in the text.

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1. Reference 1

2. Reference 2

# Acknowledgements

* Name of the internal and external expert panel members and their area of expertise;
* Name of the ECDC project manager that coordinated the work;
* Name of all contributors that performed relevant work that informed the guidance development, e.g. systematic reviews, surveys;
* If systematic reviews or parts or other relevant work, e.g. surveys, were outsourced, provide the name of the contractor and the grant or contract number;
* List of additional internal and external individuals and institutions that contributed to the work, e.g. as peer reviewers or by sharing unpublished information;
* Funding;

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# Appendices and Annexes

**Detailed guidance development process and methods**

**Methods of evidence collection, appraisal and synthesis**

* Detailed description on how the evidence was systematically searched for, selected and critically appraised for each option or guidance question analysed, including all the different information sources used and criteria for inclusion or exclusion of the evidence found;
* Description of the steps and methods applied by the panel to handle different types of evidence and assess the quality and strength of the body of evidence for each option.

**Ad hoc expert panel**

* Rationale for expert selection (internal and external experts);
* Terms of reference of the panel;
* Handling of potential conflicts of interest;
* Description of method used to obtain conclusions (e.g. voting) and to handle contradicting or minority opinions;
* State if the draft guidance has been submitted for peer review or public consultation and how the comments were taken into account.

**Supporting documents**

Any supporting document that informed the guidance should be included in the reference list. Systematic reviews (see template for ECDC Systematic Review) or surveys or studies especially performed to inform the guidance should be attached as Annex (stand-alone document) or Appendices. If more than 5 000 words long, they should be published separately and referenced accordingly.

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