



How to become and remain as a WHO-recognized NATIONAL INFLUENZA CENTRE of the GLOBAL INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE AND RESPONSE SYSTEM (GISRS)

I. BACKGROUND

National Influenza Centers (NICs)¹ together with WHO Collaborating Centers on Influenza (WHO CCs)², WHO Essential Regulatory Laboratories (ERLs) and H5 Reference Laboratories (Ref Labs) form the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) which is coordinated by the WHO Global Influenza Program (GIP).

The GISRS, previously known as the Global Influenza Surveillance Network (GISN) until 2011, was established in 1952. It has been, and is, the primary global mechanism and resource for surveillance and control of influenza. The GISRS continuously monitors the evolution of influenza viruses around the world in the interest of public health, conducts risk assessment and recommends risk management measures. GISRS functions through efficient sharing of influenza viruses and surveillance information, provision of technical support and updated reagents by and to GISRS members. GISRS institutions operate under specific WHO terms of references (TORs)³ and are coordinated by the GIP across the three levels of WHO: headquarters, regional offices (ROs) and country offices.

Purpose of this document

This document is intended to provide information on the process of WHO recognition of a NIC and a NIC's retaining such recognition.

National Influenza Centers

NICs are national institutions authorized and designated by their national authorities⁴ and subsequently formally acknowledged by WHO as national institutions recognized by WHO. NICs participate in the GISRS in accordance with the applicable WHO TORs³. A NIC may have additional obligations under the national authorities of its respective country.

Since the implementation of the revised NIC TORs in October 2017, WHO will generally be recognizing no more than one NIC per country⁵.

NICs should comply with the NIC TORs and, subject to the authorization of their respective governments, when necessary, maintain direct working relations with the members of GISRS and WHO.

¹ http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/national_influenza_centres/list/en/

² http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/collaborating_centres/list/en/

³ http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/national_influenza_centres/en/

⁴ National authorities would normally be Ministries of Health (WHO GBS Basic Documents; p136,137)

⁵ The principal applies only to those NICs designated after October 2017.

II. PROCESS FOR BECOMING A NIC⁶

A. Designation by national authorities

- ❖ A national institution intending to become a NIC should first seek an official designation from its national authorities. Upon designation, the national authorities should send through established channels of correspondence, a letter to WHO containing an official designation of the national institution and requesting WHO recognition of the institution as a NIC.

B. Process of WHO-recognition of NICs

- ❖ After receiving the official request from the national authorities, WHO will verify if there is already a WHO recognized NIC in the country.
 - In case that there is already a WHO-recognized NIC, WHO will inform the national authorities of the principle that only one NIC is recognized per country.
- ❖ In case that there is no WHO-recognized NIC in the country, the following process will apply:
 - An assessment of capacities will be organized by WHO to ensure the prospective NIC meets the NIC TORs.
 - If considered warranted by WHO, an onsite assessment will be made and the prospective NIC will be informed accordingly.
 - The outcome of the assessment will be discussed between the WHO RO and GIP, and jointly a decision will be made as to whether the prospective NIC fulfils the NIC TORs.
 1. If it is concluded that the prospective NIC does not fulfill the NIC TORs, WHO will communicate to the national authorities, with copy to the prospective NIC, the assessment results including recommendations on the areas that need to be strengthened, as well as the support that WHO will potentially be able to provide. A new assessment may be planned as appropriate following improvements implemented.
 2. Should the prospective institution be considered capable of fulfilling the NIC TORs, the acknowledgement of such recognition of the prospective NIC by WHO will be signified to the government and to the institution concerned by the WHO Regional Director.

III. RETAINING NIC RECOGNITION

- ❖ NICs recognized by WHO shall be authorized by their respective governments, when such authorization is necessary, to maintain direct working relations with WHO and members of GISRS in particular the WHO Collaborating Centres on influenza².
- ❖ NIC recognition is for one year and is tacitly renewed unless notice of termination is given by either party three months in advance.
- ❖ To ensure that the GISRS continues to work effectively, WHO will be conducting a periodical (every 2-3 years) performance review⁷ of NICs.
- ❖ Results of the performance review, if unsatisfactory, may initiate a process to terminate the WHO's recognition⁸.

IV. CONTACT INFORMATION

- ❖ The WHO Global Influenza Programme: gisrs-whohq@who.int
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for Africa: afroinfluenza@who.int
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for the Americas: flu@paho.org
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean: emrgooutbreak@who.int
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for Europe: euinfluenza@who.int
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for South East Asia: seoutbreak@who.int
- ❖ The WHO Regional Office for Western Pacific: wprofllu@who.int

⁶ This process is also in line with a similar document published by WHO EURO: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/126457/e94432.pdf

⁷ Announced at the Global NIC Meeting on 19 July 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The performance review will cover the following capacities: participation in External Quality Assessment Programme(s) (EQAP) provided by WHO (http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/external_quality_assessment_project/en/); Reporting influenza surveillance data to WHO (<http://www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241580496/en/>); and Sharing of viruses (virus isolates and/or clinical specimens) with WHO CCs (<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/259400/1/WHO-WHE-IHM-GIP-2017.6-eng.pdf?ua=1>; <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/259402/1/WHO-WHE-IHM-GIP-2017.3-eng.pdf?ua=1>)

⁸ This process will not apply if the inactive NIC is located in a country experiencing protracted emergency.