

# ONE HEALTH AND INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATION

## STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR) IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING AMONG NATIONAL IHR FOCAL POINTS (NFP) – THE TWINNING PROJECT

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**Background:** Strengthening IHR NFP capacities is essential for enhancing the global response to public health emergencies, enabling more efficient information sharing, coordination, and implementation of the IHR. Peer-to-peer experience exchange was prioritized by NFPs during workshops, online discussions, and survey addressing NFPs' needs. The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO EURO) promoted this approach by facilitating twinning between IHR NFP teams paired on common interests, similarities or challenges. The twinning NFP pairs were established during the pre-twinning workshops in 2023 and 2024. Topics for discussion were selected prior to the visits during online meetings.

The usefulness and format of twinning among participants of twinning visits from Montenegro, Poland and Serbia were being evaluated.

**Methods and Objectives:** Three face-to-face meetings (1 - 1.5 days) organized by NFPs in Warsaw, Podgorica and Belgrade (April - June 2024) were separately evaluated using the same, structured and tested evaluation form, which consist of 15 questions with 6 on usefulness, 5 on format, 4 on general impression and future twinning plans (all scaled or free text).

**Results:** Participants from visiting NFP teams and collaborating surveillance experts completed 23 evaluation forms, in total. The overall general impression of each visit ranged between 9.4 and 9.6 on a scale to 10 (10 being the most positive). Questions on usefulness and format scored 4.4 and above on a scale to 5 (5 being the highest positive). The free text fields contained mainly positive comments. All participants would like to have one or two twinings per year in the future. There were no major differences among the meetings evaluations.

**Conclusions:** Although preparation and logistics may be challenging, the face-to-face twinning proved to be useful. The gained knowledge is expected to improve NFP's capacities and networking, and participants plan to conduct more twinning in the future. This peer learning approach is also beneficial for other IHR critical capacities (such as surveillance or laboratory work) in WHO Member States and could contribute to cross-border information exchange, improving national capacities through positive benchmarking from the twinning countries.

**Keywords:** International Health Regulation (IHR), National (IHR) Focal Point, twinning, capacity strengthening, evaluation