

5 Questions and answers on Country Support Teams (CSTs)

The WHO Regional Office for Europe's innovative offer to all countries of short-term agile support

WHAT IS A COUNTRY SUPPORT TEAM?

A Country Support Team (CST) provides a short-term, agile response to planned or ad hoc requests by a Member State. It addresses specific public health and health system needs that are aligned with WHO and Member State priorities. The concept was co-developed with countries, for countries and aims to:



Address a public health issue over a six-to-twelve-month period of work, from concept to output



Co-develop the work and output with experts from WHO, partners and the Member State



Identify and follow a clear course from implementation to impact (e.g. policy action)



Incorporate appropriate evaluation and follow up of the initial collaborative exercise



Benefit from coordination by WHO's Division of Country Support and Partnerships (CPA)

WHAT A COUNTRY SUPPORT TEAM IS NOT

A CST does *not* offer long-term support, a whole programme of work, or single country missions. These types of support are provided by WHO Regional Office for Europe through different approaches.

Why request a WHO CST?

Member States can strengthen their health policies by partnering with WHO, gaining access to international expertise and global best practices. By leveraging WHO's convening power, they can collaborate with leading academic experts and seasoned policymakers from around the world. This collaboration fosters a more comprehensive approach to addressing complex challenges. It also provides objective second opinions when needed, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of health strategies.

How to start a CST

The added value of involving WHO can be identified by the Member State in consultation with WHO. It may also be suggested by an institution in the Member State already engaged in collaboration with WHO, such as public health institutes or a WHO collaborating centre. The Member State, through its WHO national counterpart, may then submit a request to WHO for a CST. WHO and the Member State would then hold meetings to discuss the purpose, scope, approach, expected outcomes and resources.

Experience so far

- Belgium requested support in 2022 to conduct an independent public health review of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), resulting in recommendations for an NCD policy framework.
- A CST with Malta in 2023 reviewed the current status of activities to prevent and control NCDs in the country, and helped Malta launch its first ever NCD prevention framework.
- The CST approach was also used with Germany, to develop a Federal Institute for Prevention and Education in Medicine and establish a pilot for the WHO country counterpart model.



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