

GUIDELINES ON MEETINGS/CONFERENCES
ORGANISED OUTSIDE COUNCIL OF EUROPE HEADQUARTERS
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Main principles

- The Council of Europe (CoE) has duty of care responsibilities to participants of meetings organised by the Organisation.
- Within this principle, the CoE undertakes measures to provide a safe environment inside meeting rooms and to reduce exposure to health risks as much as possible.
- Each meeting organised by the CoE should at minimum observe the health and hygiene rules established by local authorities.
- The CoE, without hindering the above rules, may apply additional safety measures during the meeting to further reduce health risks.
- CoE managers directly involved in organising a meeting are responsible for ensuring the application of the relevant rules and procedures during the meeting.
- Video conferencing should always be prioritised over site meetings wherever possible (please refer to the DGA memorandum on practical arrangements for videoconferences).
- Meeting participants should be informed of the health and hygiene rules applied to the meeting. They should also be informed about basic precautionary measures and actions against COVID-19 virus.

General recommendations for meeting rooms

- Social distancing should be observed during the meeting.
- The minimum distance between participants should be at least 2 metres.
- Participants should wear masks during the meeting.
- CoE staff should have spare masks available in the meeting room to provide to participants who do not bring masks with them.
- Hand sanitisers should be available for meeting participants in or at the meeting room.
- The size of the meeting room or its maximum capacity should be at least twice as large as the actual number of participants.
- Meeting rooms should be thoroughly cleaned (seats, surfaces, door or window handles, light switches ...) with cleaning products containing disinfectant before and after each meeting.
- A minimum 1-hour break should be scheduled between different meetings to allow time for ventilation, cleaning and disinfection of the meeting room as well as to avoid an overlap between groups.

- Where possible, each meeting should be limited to 4 hours per day.
- A special, closed recycling bin should be available in the meeting room for the disposal of masks (in case they need to be changed), gloves and other used hygiene materials.
- Where possible, the entry and exit doors of the meeting room should be separate and clearly marked.
- CoE meeting organisers should check the meeting room beforehand and make sure all required measures and tools are in place.
- CoE staff responsible for organising the meeting should also have gloves and disinfecting wipes to be used when necessary.
- CoE staff dealing with sorting and/or distributing working documents to participants should wear gloves.
- Provision of catering and coffee breaks should be avoided as much as possible.
- CoE managers organising meetings **outside CoE Headquarters** should apply, and where necessary, adapt the above requirements.
- Since there are specific needs for meetings organised **at CoE Headquarters**, a complete list of specific measures applicable for such meetings are presented separately.

Meeting participants

- The CoE staff responsible for organising the meeting should inform participants of the health and hygiene rules applicable for the meeting.
- CoE staff members should also include COVID-19 related safety recommendations and guidelines in the invitation letter sent to participants. Such inputs for invitation letters are presented in APPENDIX 1.
- The CoE staff responsible for organising the meeting shall also be aware of the procedures established by the host state for addressing situations where meeting participants show COVID-19 symptoms during the meeting. In addition, if a meeting participant is not feeling well or is having COVID-19 like symptoms during the meeting:
 - Where possible, isolate him/her from other meeting participants in a separate room.
 - Ask for medical assistance for the participant in line with the instructions of local authorities and with the policies of the establishment/hotel where the meeting is taking place.
 - Stop, cancel the meeting and ask for a thorough disinfection of the meeting room.
 - For the other participants, if everyone was wearing a mask at all times and was adhering to distancing measures of at least 2, only an examination of temperature twice a day and monitoring for appearance of COVID-19 like symptoms is necessary. If this was not the case, refer to the local health authorities.

Event management and Hotel offers

- CoE staff responsible for organising the meeting, before launching procurement procedures for the selection of meeting venues, should include special COVID-19 safety requirements in the technical specifications when launching the procedure.
- These requirements are listed in the APPENDIX 2.
- CoE meeting organisers should also check that these requirements are respected by hotels/meeting service providers. Should they not be respected, the CoE staff should inform the company and request immediately that they fix the shortcomings.

Catering

- Provision of coffee breaks and lunches to meeting participants should be avoided where possible. This should especially be the case for meetings that last no longer than 4 hours per day.
- If the meeting lasts longer and it is not possible to avoid coffee breaks and/or lunches, such catering services should be provided with a strict observation of the relevant rules of the local authorities.
- Additional risk reduction measures can be provided by the service provider and/or by the Council of Europe.
- 'buffet' style coffee breaks and lunches should be avoided. they should be served for the relevant service provider to meeting participants.

Accommodation

- In cases where the CoE is responsible for providing accommodation for meeting participants, relevant health and hygiene standards should be adhered to when selecting such premises.
- When launching a procurement procedure, service providers should be requested to provide accommodation for meeting participants in hotels which comply with the pandemic-related health and hygiene requirements of the local authorities.
- Under no circumstances shall participants share a room for accommodation.
- CoE staff members responsible for organising meetings and accommodation for participants should, where possible, observe and address with the service provider any concerns related to health and hygiene in the accommodation is provided.

Transportation

- Where the CoE is responsible for provision of transportation services for meeting participants, relevant health and hygiene standards should be observed in the means of transportation.
- Social distancing should be observed in the transportation i.e.:
 - For sedans – no more than two passengers. No passenger should sit next to the driver
 - For vans – no more than one passenger on each row, diagonally behind each other
 - For buses – no more than one passenger on each attached seat, diagonally behind each other
- The driver/transportation company should strictly observe the health and hygiene requirements of local authorities.
- In addition, in the technical specifications for transportation services, the standards presented in APPENDIX 3 should be requested from the service provider.

APPENDIX 2

Health and hygiene recommendations for participants of meetings organised by the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is committed to ensure the safety and well-being of meeting participants and undertakes all necessary measures to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Avoid infecting others if you are not feeling well

- Check your temperature before coming to the meeting. Do not come if it is higher than 37,8°C.
- Do not come to the meeting if you have COVID-19 like symptoms or were recently in contact with a person who had such symptoms or has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.
- If you are not feeling well before the meeting, inform the meeting organiser and arrange to get an assessment from a healthcare provider. It is best if you call the healthcare provider before visiting to inform them of your condition.
- Maintain your distance from others – at least 2 metres.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the special closed waste bin to dispose of it after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.

Reduce your exposure to viruses

- Avoid close contact (within 2 metres) with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
- Wash or sanitise your hands frequently.
- Wear masks during meetings.

During the meeting

- If you are not feeling well during the meeting, inform the meeting organiser and arrange to get an assessment from a healthcare provider.
- Where needed, organisers will coordinate and advise you on how to get access to medical care.
- Maintain your distance from others – at least 2 metres.

For medical emergencies

You should inform the meeting organiser and they will connect you or provide you with the contact number of the local health authority or paramedics.

Instructions for wearing the mask

- Before picking up your mask, wash your hands with soap and water or with hydroalcoholic gel for at least 20 seconds.
- Always hold the mask by the elastics or ties and do not touch the central fabric part of the mask.
- Check that the coloured side of the mask is facing outwards.
- Position the mask in the correct direction (metal strip at top of mask).
- Place the mask over the face.
- Put the elastics around the ears.
- If you have ties, tie the top tie behind your head first.
- Pull the bottom of the mask to cover your nose, mouth, and chin.
- Pinch the metal strip at the top so that it fits the shape of the nose.
- Do not touch the central fabric part of the mask and only move it to eat/drink, blow your nose and throw it away.
- To eat, drink or blow your nose, take one of the elastics with one hand and move the mask away from your face, keeping the other elastic around your ear. Then put the mask back on with the elastic around the ear.
- After having thrown the mask away or if you inadvertently touch the central fabric part, wash your hands immediately.

How long can a mask be worn?

- The maximum length of time is 4 hours. A mask must also be changed when it is wet or soiled.

What to do after the maximum 4 hours of wearing a surgical mask ?

- Throw it away into a special closed waste bin inside or outside the meeting room.

General preventive measures against COVID-19 virus

Strict respect of barrier gestures and physical distancing measures are essential to protect yourself and limit the spread of the virus:

- Wash your hands at least once an hour with hot water and soap or after touching potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Use a hydroalcoholic gel when soap and water are not readily available.
- If you are ill, wear a surgical mask when in the presence of others, do not travel, try to stay where you are, do not come to the office or attend a meeting and consult your doctor or the emergency services if you have symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or feeling weak.
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands.
- Use the crease of your elbow when sneezing or coughing, use tissues to blow your nose, then throw them into the closed waste bin and wash your hands.
- Do not shake hands.
- Do not kiss.
- Do not share your personal belongings.
- Avoid close contact (< 2 metres) with those around you and especially with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid sharing food, drinks and personal items.
- Clean your mobile phone with a disinfectant wipe twice a day
- If you cannot avoid touching objects that are handled by many people (such as handrails, door handles, light switches, etc.), make sure you do not touch your face and wash your hands as soon as possible.
- In the toilets, put down the seat before flushing.
- Take your temperature twice a day.

Travel

- Practise hand hygiene and wear a mask correctly during travel.
- Wear a mask when you are travelling on public transportation (airplane, train, bus, taxi etc.).
- Before traveling, pack sanitising wipes and hand sanitiser in case you are unable to wash your hands at your destination.
- Check with local transit authorities for the latest information on changes to services and procedures, especially if you might need additional assistance.
- When using public transportation avoid touching surfaces, practise social distancing, practise hand hygiene and improve ventilation whenever possible.
- When booking your travel:
 - Prioritise transportation carriers with a clear protocol detailing all the health and safety measures in place before, during and after the flight.
 - Prioritise carriers with clear rebooking conditions in case the flight is cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a clear repatriation protocol in case borders are closed because of the pandemic.

APPENDIX 2

Health and hygiene requirement for event organisation companies/hotels providing services for events organised by the Council of Europe

- The size of the meeting room or its maximum capacity should be at least twice as large as the actual number of participants.
- The minimum distance between participants should be at least 2 metres.
- Meeting rooms should be thoroughly cleaned with a cleaning product containing a viricidal agent before and after each meeting.
- All special equipment provided by the service provider (computers, projectors, headphones, microphones etc.) should also be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected before and after the meeting.
- Hand sanitisers should be available for meeting participants.
- A special, closed recycling bin should be available in the meeting room for the disposal of masks, gloves and other used hygiene materials.
- The entry and exit doors of the meeting room should be separate and clearly marked.
- A minimum 1-hour break should be scheduled between meetings to allow time for ventilation, cleaning and disinfection of the meeting room as well as to avoid an overlap between groups.
- The hygiene instructions of local authorities should be strictly observed.
- The staff responsible for the provision of conference services to the Council of Europe should be aware of the protocols on dealing with participants showing COVID-19-like symptoms.
- If the service provider has special protocols on COVID-19, it should share these with the relevant staff members of the Council of Europe at the earliest opportunity.

APPENDIX 3

Health and hygiene requirements for companies providing transportation services for the Council of Europe

- Drivers with COVID-19-like symptoms should not be allowed to drive the vehicle.
- The health and hygiene requirements of local authorities should be strictly observed
- Both driver and passengers must wear masks inside the vehicle.
- Maximum occupancy of the vehicle (including driver):
 - For sedans – no more than one passenger. No passenger should sit next to the driver.
 - For vans – no more than one passenger on each row, diagonally behind each other
 - For buses – no more than one passenger on each attached seat, diagonally behind each other
- Each time passenger/s have been transported, the driver should:
 - clean/disinfect the passenger seat including internal and external handles with disinfectant wipes or spray.
 - Ventilate the inside of the vehicle by opening windows.
- Using the air conditioner in the vehicle should be avoided as much as possible. The vehicle should be ventilated with fresh air instead.
- The exterior side of the vehicle should be washed each day that it is used.