WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

Update of the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List



Member States Information Session

4 March 2026, 10:00 am – 11:00 am

World Health Organization

Objective of the Information Session

To inform Permanent Missions of the objective, process and timeline to implement the Expert Advisory Group's recommendations on the clarity, safeguards and appropriate flexibility in the application of the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List as outlined in Agenda item 13 – EB158/17.

World Health Organization

Expert Advisory Group Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Code implementation**
   - For Member States
   - For WHO secretariat and other stakeholders
     - ❑Advocacy on the Code and clarity and flexibility on the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List.
     - ❑Support for bilateral agreement development and evaluation.
     - ❑Capacity building to strengthen data, promotion of co-investment dialogues and knowledge sharing.
     - ❑Engagement with non-State actors, regulators and other stakeholders.
     - ❑Support for identified research agenda on international migration of health and care workforce.

2. **Additional text to the code**

Recommendations concerning additional text for the Code will be discussed during the anticipated Member State led consultations.

World Health Organization

Decision by the 158th Executive Board

Recommendation of the Expert Advisory Group

To the WHO Secretariat and other stakeholders

4. **Advocacy on the Code and clarity on the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List:**

(a) Provide clear and, as applicable, operational definitions of specific aspects and terms related to the Code, information products tailored to different audiences, illustrative examples and case studies.

(b) Provide clarity on the objective, use and impact of the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List. The aim of the List is to identify countries facing health workforce vulnerabilities that would benefit from support and safeguards measures, including strengthening health systems, health workforce investments and developing bilateral agreements.

(c) There should be flexibility in the application of the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List through a process whereby, under certain circumstances and in line with domestic health workforce and migration policy:

(i) Member States on the List may communicate to the Secretariat their willingness to allow active international recruitment;

(ii) Member States not on the List may communicate to the Secretariat their desire for the support and safeguards measures of the List to be extended to them;

(iii) Situations warranting such flexibility may include, among others, recruitment under bilateral agreements or in the case of oversupply or undersupply of health personnel documented by robust data and evidence such as health labour market analysis results.

Source: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB158/B158_17-en.pdf

World Health Organization

World Health Organization

Executive Board
158th session

Agenda item 13 EB158/CONF./3

2 February 2026

WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

Draft decision proposed by Germany, the Philippines, Romania and Thailand

The Executive Board, having considered the report of the Expert Advisory Group on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel,[1]

Decided:

(1) to reiterate its support for the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel;

(2) to recognize the final report of the Expert Advisory Group following regional consultations, and to commend the Group for the work;

(3) to invite Member States and partners, and request the Secretariat, including by utilizing the WHO Academy and WHO collaborating centres, to renew their efforts to strengthen implementation of the Code, in alignment with the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group;

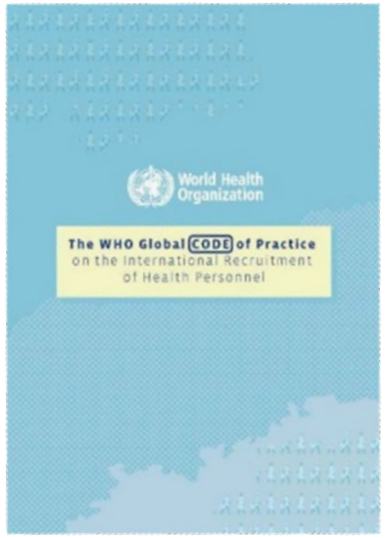
(4) to note the Expert Advisory Group's recommendations including regarding clarity, safeguards and appropriate flexibility in the application of the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List;

(5) to further note the Expert Advisory Group's emphasis on the need for meaningful co-investment in health workforce development and health system strengthening in source countries, in order to support health workforce sustainability and the delivery of proportional benefits;

(6) to request the next review of the relevance and effectiveness of the Code to be submitted to the Eighty-fifth World Health Assembly, after the seventh round of Code reporting within available resources;

[1] Document EB158/17.

Publication of the WHO health workforce support and safeguards list (SSL) is based on the mandate by the World Health Assembly.



Article 5 – Health workforce development and health systems sustainability

5.1 In accordance with the guiding principle as stated in Article 3 of this Code, the health systems of both source and destination countries should derive benefits from the international migration of health personnel. Destination countries are encouraged to collaborate with source countries to sustain and promote health human resource development and training as appropriate. Member States should discourage active recruitment of health personnel from developing countries facing critical shortages of health workers.

World Health Organization

SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY **A73/9**
Provisional agenda item 12 **8 May 2020**

WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

Report of the WHO Expert Advisory Group on the Relevance and Effectiveness of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

(d) Following a presentation of a variety of options and extensive deliberation,[1] the EAG finds that the UHC service coverage index (UHC SCI),[2] the official indicator for SDG 3.8.1, and health workforce density, the official indicator for SDG 3.C.1, should be used to identify countries with the most pressing health workforce challenges in relation to UHC and where special caution in terms of active international recruitment is warranted. Based upon this analysis, to be regularly updated alongside Code progress reports, the EAG suggests that countries which both score in the first quartile of the UHC SCI and have less than the median density of doctors, nurses and midwives should be prioritized for intensified health workforce related support and active recruitment-related safeguards.[3] Forty-three countries fall in the lowest quartile of the UHC SCI and have less than the median density of doctors, nurses and midwives (see Fig. 1 below with further methodological details to be available on WHO's website).

World Health Organization

Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List, 2020

World Health Organization

WHO health workforce support and safeguards list

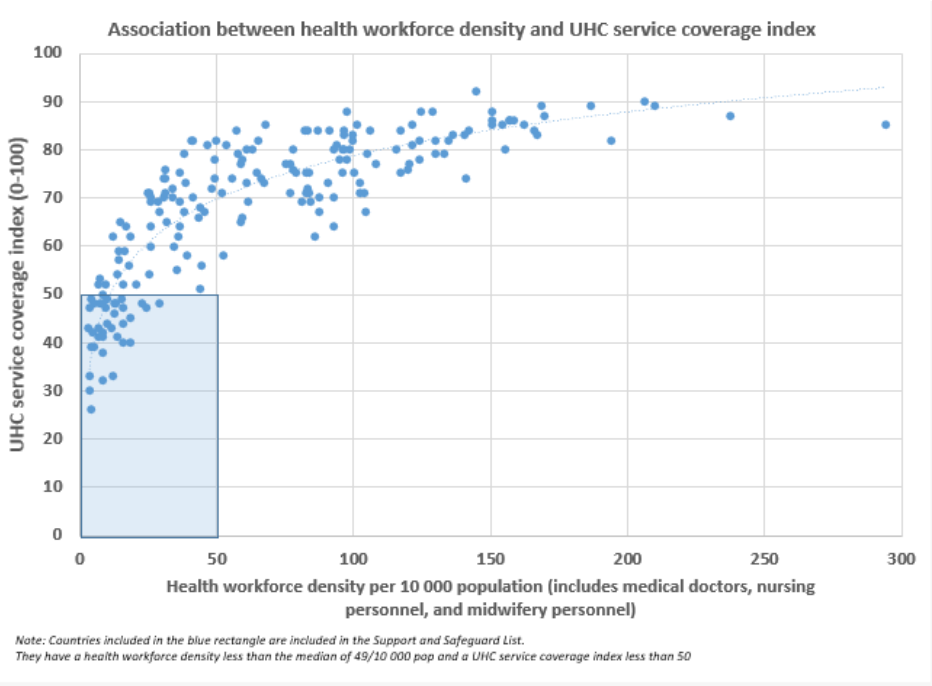
2023

World Health Organization

Support and Safeguards List (SSL): methodology and recommendations

Technical criteria: UHC Service coverage index AND health workforce density

Result: 36 countries in SSL 2026 primarily due to improvement in UHC Service Coverage Index.



Recommendations

- Countries in the SSL should be prioritized for health personnel development & health system related support.
- Safeguards that discourage active international recruitment of health personnel should be provided to countries in the SSL with exceptions and others in accordance with country policy.

<u>Government-to-government agreements</u> related to health worker mobility for the listed countries should:

- ensure adequate domestic supply in countries;
- engage health sector stakeholders, including ministries of health;
- specify benefits to the health system of source countries that are commensurate and proportional to the benefits accruing to destination countries; and
- be notified to the WHO

World Health Organization

Comparing Support and Safeguards List 2023 and 2006

	Support and Safeguards list 2023	Support and Safeguards list 2026
AFR	37	27
AMR	1	1
EMR	6	5
EUR	0	0
SEA	3	1
WPR	8	2
TOTAL	**55**	**36**

Countries dropped from SSL 2023

AFR: Comoros, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

EMR: Pakistan

SEA: Bangladesh, Nepal

WPR: Micronesia, Kiribati, Lao, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

World Health Organization

Countries that meet technical criteria for SSL 2026

AFR			AMR	SEAR
Angola	Equatorial Guinea	Niger	Haiti	Timor-Leste
Benin	Eritrea	Nigeria		
Burkina Faso	Ethiopia	Senegal	**EMR**	**WPR**
Burundi	Gabon	Sierra Leone	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea
Cameroon	Guinea	South Sudan	Djibouti	Solomon Islands
Central African Republic	Guinea-Bissau	Togo	Somalia	
Chad	Liberia	United Republic of Tanzania	Sudan	
Congo	Madagascar		Yemen	
Cote d'Ivoire	Mali			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mauritania			

World Health Organization

Technical criteria: Countries listed have UHC SCI <50 AND health workforce density < median

Communication process with countries for desired flexibilities

- WHO Secretariat will inform the relevant government officials on
  - ➢ the Support and Safeguards List 2026; and
  - ➢ request confirmation of country policy decision on exception or extension of the recommended safeguards.
- WHO Regional Offices in coordination with country offices will follow up with governments.
- If no response from government officials, WHO recommendations will apply to the countries that meet the technical criteria for the Support and Safeguards List 2026.
- The WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List 2026 will be published following internal clearance procedures.

World Health Organization

Support and Safeguards List 2026: Outline

- Background and Purpose of the SSL
- Methodology
- Recommendation and Table of countries
- Policy implementation: How to use the SSL

World Health Organization

Proposed Presentation of the Support and Safeguards List 2026

For ease of use, all countries will appear in one table, grouped according to whether they meet the technical criteria and/or need flexibilities.

Do not meet the Support and Safeguards List criteria but country policy request recommended safeguards ***Active international recruitment discouraged***	**Meet the Support and Safeguards List criteria and country policy decision confirms requiring recommended safeguards** ***Active international recruitment discouraged***	**Meet the Support and Safeguards List criteria but country policy decision allows active international recruitment**

World Health Organization

Thank you

For more information:

WHOGlobalCode@who.int

This presentation has been designed to be accessible, for a positive and inclusive user experience for all.



World Health Organization