

Box 1 Recommendations

Member States

1. Ensure that the core capacities required of national health laboratories by IHR (2005) are fully met.
 - Continue to work closely with WHO, partners and donors to ensure national health laboratory policy, strategy and action plan are developed/revised in line with the regional strategy, and that adequate logistics, human and financial resources are made available for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national action plan.
 - Make use of opportunities offered by ongoing global health security concerns (such as Ebola virus disease) to obtain the commitment needed from national authorities.
2. Institutionalize the laboratory quality management system (LQMS) and use the laboratory quality stepwise implementation tool to establish, strengthen and maintain such systems towards achieving the goal of producing accurate, reliable and timely results in a cost-efficient and sustainable manner.
3. Institutionalize laboratory biorisk management at the national level through establishment of a biorisk management unit, designation of biorisk management officers and inclusion of strategic goals related to biorisk management in the national laboratory policy and strategic plan.
4. Consider laboratory twinning programmes, intercountry exchanges and attachments of technical and managerial staff for the purpose of sharing experience, mentoring, and reproducing best practices in the implementation of laboratory quality management systems and biorisk management.
5. Develop national and regional capacity for repair and maintenance of laboratory facilities and equipment, including certification of biological safety cabinets.
6. Strengthen and maintain laboratory capacity for safe, timely and reliable detection and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and actively participate in regional and international collaborative initiatives.

Member States and WHO

7. Finalize the regional health laboratory strategy 2015–2019 for use in developing national laboratory policies and strategic plans.
8. Support the formulation and implementation of national laboratory policies and strategic plans.
 - National strategic plans should go beyond specific laboratory matters to include operational mechanisms and activities to secure sustainable coordination with key stakeholders in clinical and public health practices.
 - Directors of public health laboratories should play an active role in the overall country framework related to IHR implementation, country preparedness and response to public health emergencies, and the overall global health security.
9. Facilitate the establishment of a regional network of laboratories to share experiences and information and coordinate laboratory roles and inputs in terms of global health security.
 - Existing subregional collaboration frameworks (GCC, G5, Maghreb countries) should be used as an opportunity to improve intercountry collaboration and coordination.
 - Health laboratories should maintain frequent communication between themselves, reference laboratories and WHO collaborating centres and develop efficient networking to facilitate day-to-day working and in emergency situations.
10. Identify strategically located regional reference laboratories and collaborating centres for diagnosis, confirmation and research of known and emerging pathogens of public health concern in the Region and formalize their networks and linkages.