EUCAST EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON ANTIMICROBIAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TESTING

European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases

## Standard Operating Procedure

# Interaction of EUCAST Steering Committee with the network of national antimicrobial susceptibility testing committees

## EUCAST SOP 5.3

## 2 December 2021

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# Foreword

The European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (EUCAST) is organised by the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and the national antimicrobial breakpoint committees in Europe, currently in France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom. EUCAST was established by ESCMID in 1997, was restructured in 2001-2002 and has been in operation in its current form since 2002. Countries outside Europe are increasingly forming EUCAST-affiliated national antimicrobial susceptibility testing (AST) committees and implementing the EUCAST systems of testing methods and breakpoints.

The current remit of EUCAST is to harmonise clinical breakpoints for existing antimicrobial agents in Europe, to determine clinical breakpoints for new agents, to define wild-type MIC distributions and to set epidemiological cut-off values, to revise breakpoints as required, to harmonise methodology for antimicrobial susceptibility testing, to develop a website with MIC and zone diameter distributions of antimicrobial agents for a wide range of organisms, to provide continuing education on AST and to liaise with European governmental agencies and European networks involved with antimicrobial resistance and resistance surveillance.

Information on EUCAST, EUCAST breakpoints and all documents are freely available on the EUCAST website at http://www.EUCAST.org.

# Citation of EUCAST documents

EUCAST documents published on the EUCAST website should be cited in the following way: European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing. Name of document, EUCAST version number, year. Website address.

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| Abbreviations | |
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| BSAC | British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (UK) |
| CA-SFM | Comité de l´Antibiogramme de la Société Francaise de Microbiologie (France) |
| CRG | Commissie Richtlijnen Gevoeligheidsbepalingen (Netherlands) |
| DIN | Deutsches Institute for Normung eV. (Germany) |
| EARS-Net | European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network |
| ECDC | European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control |
| EEA | European Economic Area |
| EMA | European Medicines Agency |
| EU | European Union |
| EUCAST | European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing |
| ESCMID | European Society for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases |
| ~~FESCI~~ | ~~Federation of European Societies of Chemotherapy and Infection~~ |
| GC | EUCAST General Committee |
| ISAC | International Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy |
| NAC | National Antimicrobial susceptibility testing Committee |
| NWGA (AFA) | Norwegian Working Group for Antibiotics (Arbeidsgruppen for antibiotikaspørsmål) (Norway) |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| SC | EUCAST Steering Committee |
| SRGA | The Swedish Reference Group of Antibiotics (Sweden) |
| SWAB | Stichting Werkgroep Antibioticabeleid (Netherlands) |

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| 1 | Scope |
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| **1.1** | This SOP describes how the EUCAST Steering Committee (SC) interacts with National Antimicrobial susceptibility testing Committees (NACs). |

| 2 | Introduction |
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| **2.1** | EUCAST recommends that all countries using or intending to use EUCAST methods and breakpoints to set up a NAC (or a committee corresponding to this description). |
| **2.2** | The interaction of the SC with NACs is fundamental to the organisation and operation of EUCAST. The NAC is the national contact point for the EUCAST SC. The chairman of the NAC, or another member appointed by the NAC, serves as the EUCAST General Committee representative. As a representative of a European NAC, the GC representative can serve on the EUCAST SC. It is expected that the NAC has national support at a professional level and that there is only one NAC. Countries outside Europe, particularly if they are in the process of adopting EUCAST recommendations, are encouraged to form a NAC and the chairperson may be a national representative on the EUCAST GC and may periodically attend SC meetings as an observer (see EUCAST statutes, available from the EUCAST website).<br><br>While consensus decisions are ultimately taken by the EUCAST SC, the NACs are the route through which EUCAST consults with all participating countries and the NACs have a major role in disseminating and facilitating implementation of EUCAST breakpoints and methods and providing guidance on antimicrobial susceptibility testing in individual countries. |
| **2.3** | Since 2002, the main input to EUCAST has been through the historically active European National Breakpoint Committees: BSAC (UK), CA-SFM (France), CRG, superseded by SWAB (The Netherlands), DIN, superseded by NAC Germany (Germany), NWGA (Norway) and SRGA (Sweden). Each of the committees has been comprised of approximately 10-15 members expert in various fields related to breakpoints and/or antimicrobial susceptibility testing. The interaction of the SC with these committees has been central to the harmonisation of European breakpoints for existing agents (see EUCAST SOP 1, available from the EUCAST website) and the process of setting breakpoints for new agents (see EUCAST SOP 2, available from the EUCAST website).<br><br>Representatives of individual countries, together with representatives of FESCI, ISAC, ECDC (*ex officio*) and EMA (*ex officio*), make up the EUCAST General Committee (GC). The GC members are consulted on various issues including proposals for harmonised breakpoints (see SOP 1). |

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| | In recent years, there has been widespread adoption of EUCAST breakpoints in Europe and beyond. In addition, the need for a NAC in each country has been promoted by EUCAST and NACs are now established in most European countries and many outside Europe. |
| **2.4** | With the wide establishment of NACs in European countries and elsewhere, the relationship between the SC and NACs changed slightly. Changes to provide additional GC representation on the SC were agreed at the EUCAST General Committee meeting in London on 1 April 2012. |

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| **3** | **Structure of NACs** |
| **3.1** | **Structure**<br>This will differ among countries and several countries have had such groups established for many years. The NAC may be an independent committee, a subcommittee of a group with a wider antimicrobial remit (such as the EU/EEA inter-sectorial mechanism implemented for coordinating national policy on prudent use of antimicrobial agents), or the activity may be included as part of the work of a committee with a general antimicrobial remit. |
| **3.2** | **National Breakpoint Committees**<br>These committees fulfil the role of NACs in their respective countries but they also have an additional role in the setting of breakpoints for new agents. This is a confidential process agreed between EMA, EUCAST and the pharmaceutical industry, which allows EUCAST and the National Breakpoint Committees to take part in the process. |
| **3.3** | **Membership**<br>This will depend on the NAC structure and national policy, and the national legal and regulatory arrangements for guidance on antimicrobial susceptibility testing. However, the NAC must include experts and stakeholders in antimicrobial susceptibility testing and must have professional credibility with microbiology laboratories. The number of members will depend on the particular structure of the NAC. It may include:<br>• Individual experts<br>• Representatives of clinical laboratories<br>• Representatives of professional organisations/societies in clinical microbiology and infectious diseases<br>• Representatives of government and public health authorities<br>• Representatives of quality assurance agencies<br>• Representatives of veterinary and food agencies |

| 4 | **Remit of NACs** |
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| **4.1** | To promote high standards in susceptibility testing. This major task involves formulating a strategy at a national level and may include:<br>• Action through government agencies, accreditation agencies, professional organisations or societies, as appropriate<br>• A decision to follow EUCAST breakpoints and guidelines for antimicrobial susceptibility testing |
| **4.2** | To promote and facilitate implementation of EUCAST breakpoints and methods<br>• Identify stakeholders and provide information<br>• Provide guidance and technical support to clinical and public health microbiology laboratories.<br>• Provide practical guidelines for introducing antimicrobial susceptibility testing methods<br>• Provide breakpoint tables and method descriptions<br>• Communicate with device manufacturers to ensure that there are no practical limitations related to antimicrobial susceptibility testing devices<br>• Communicate with laboratory staff to ensure that all are informed<br>• Communicate with clinicians on the consequences of breakpoint changes<br>• Communicate with government agencies to ensure that they promote endorsement of EUCAST guidelines, where applicable<br>• Communicate with professional organisations/societies<br>• Communicate with quality assurance agencies to ensure that they use EUCAST breakpoints<br>• When required, translate relevant documents |
| **4.3** | To provide education<br>• Organise meetings, practical courses and/or workshops<br>• Provide information tailored to national needs, preferably through a NAC website |
| **4.4** | To liaise and consult with EUCAST<br>• Provide a representative for the EUCAST GC. This will normally be the chair, scientific secretary or other officer of the NAC<br>• Use EUCAST contacts for advice and support<br>• Respond to EUCAST requests for information and to give national views on consultation documents |
| **4.5** | To liaise with national and international groups and public health agencies involved in antimicrobial resistance surveillance in Europe and more widely, as appropriate. This may include:<br>• National and international resistance surveillance groups<br>• EARS-Net through their National EARS-Net representatives |

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| | • ECDC public health microbiology programme, through their National Microbiology Focal Points, for EU and EEA countries<br>• Veterinary and food resistance surveillance groups |

| 5 | **Consultation between the SC and NACs** |
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| **5.1** | The SC will consult the NACs via email through their representative on the EUCAST GC. Issues on which NACs will be consulted include:<br>• Proposals on harmonisation of existing MIC breakpoints<br>• Proposals to revise breakpoints<br>• Proposals for standard methods<br>• Proposals to change the EUCAST organisation |
| **5.2** | Any NAC may submit proposals of their own to the SC for discussion and, if deemed necessary by the SC, consultation with other NACs. |

| 6 | **Support of NACs by the SC** |
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| **6.1** | When practically and financially possible, SC members will attend NAC meetings or meetings to support the establishment of NACs or educational meetings, courses and workshops organised by NACs. |
| **6.2** | NAC members or groups planning the establishment of NACs may contact the SC for support and guidance. |
| **6.3** | All EUCAST documents are freely available on the EUCAST website for use by NACs or any others. |
| **6.4** | Questions from NAC members or others in relation to EUCAST breakpoints and methods will be answered by the SC and common questions, with answers, will be added to the Question & Answer section on the EUCAST website. |
| **6.5** | All NAC members may attend educational meetings organised by EUCAST and the GC meeting held annually at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID). |

| 7 | **Meetings between the SC and NACs** |
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| 8 | Maintenance of information on NACs |
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| **8.1** | The EUCAST website will list the following:<br>• Name of the NAC<br>• Name of the organisation(s) supporting the NAC<br>• The Chairperson of the NAC<br>• The NAC representative on the EUCAST General Committee<br>• A link to the NAC website, if available<br>• A link to EUCAST documents translated by the NAC and posted on the NAC website<br>• Any other relevant information requested by the NAC |
| **8.2** | It is the responsibility of the individual NACs to inform EUCAST when website information on their NAC needs to be updated. |