



EUROPEAN ESTHER ALLIANCE CHARTER

Preamble

The European ESTHER Alliance is a network of Governments and their institutions and organizations. It mobilizes health expertise and health institution partnerships to contribute to the global health agenda as part of international development cooperation involving low-income countries. It is committed to the full respect of the highest human rights standards.

Originally established in 2002 to face the emergency represented by HIV/AIDS in developing countries and to counter the blatant inequalities between the global North and South in access to treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS, the initiative gradually expanded its mandate and fields of intervention.

The European ESTHER Alliance is consequently involved across a range of Global Health priorities. The unfinished business addressing Maternal and Child health will continue to be a priority together with communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, hygiene and patient safety; with the main goal to strengthen health systems, improve quality of service delivery and ultimately better health outcomes.

This represents a broadened agenda for the European ESTHER Alliance, matching the international agenda in health, and specifically the 2030 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The European ESTHER Alliance is dedicated to SDG 3, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

The ESTHER Alliance approach is captured in its definition of partnership:

“ESTHER Institutional Health Partnerships are collaborative relationships between at least two institutions based on trust, equality and mutual interest to work as peers towards common objectives. They contribute to the improvement of health services through reciprocal institutional strengthening, capacity building and health workforce development.”

The ESTHER Alliance is committed to high standards of working in partnerships and has adopted a Charter for Quality of Partnership. Among its principles, the ESTHER Alliance attaches particular importance to equality in partnerships and seeks to achieve reciprocal benefits in both North and South institutions.

Each member country ratified a ministerial Declaration and committed to develop the ESTHER Initiative by implementing capacity building activities and developing partnerships between hospitals of the North and hospitals and health structures in country partners.

From this initial framework, the European ESTHER Alliance has included additional and complementary approaches: partnerships with institutions other than hospitals (research institutes, universities), Civil Society Organizations partnerships, Extra Hospital Technical assistance, Information and Communication Technologies, operational research, monitoring and evaluation.

This represents the evolution of the ESTHER *modus operandi* and the definition of a new business model that reflects member country development cooperation in health priorities and the development cooperation in health landscape 14 years after the launch of the ESTHER Initiative. This evolution has been translated into a new strategic framework to guide the European ESTHER Alliance action from 2015 to 2020, and a new governing structure with the formal establishment of a Board.

This Charter serves as a common reference framework for current and future ESTHER stakeholders

1. The aim of the European ESTHER Alliance is to contribute to health systems strengthening through country partners to improve health outcomes and to contribute to the international community health agenda, particularly the health Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all stages.
2. The ESTHER Alliance builds on the WHO concept that a health system comprises six building blocks: service delivery; health workforce; information; medical products, vaccines and technologies; financing; and leadership and governance.
3. The ESTHER Alliance focuses on:
 - a. Improving health services to deliver effective and safe quality care.
 - b. Strengthening health workforce through peer-working and capacity building interventions.
 - c. Improving health information systems to increase health system performance, guide policy makers in priority setting and support health professionals for quality patient care and follow up.
 - d. Strengthening drug procurement system management to ensure equitable and affordable access for all to essential medical products.
 - e. Supporting health authorities in health policy design, implementation and evaluation.
 - f. Close collaboration and coordination at county level
4. Vulnerable and most at risk populations are a priority for the ESTHER Alliance interventions. In this regard, it supports the fight against inequalities (in accordance with the SDG 10: reduce inequality within and among countries), and this is a crucial component of its operational strategy.

5. The gender dimension (in accordance with the SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) remains a key priority for the ESTHER Alliance.
6. Health workforce development is a key aspect of ESTHER partnerships and the ESTHER Alliance seeks to contribute to the objectives of the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030, aligned with the Universal Health Coverage agenda.
7. ESTHER Alliance partnerships are aligned with SDG 17, “to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, by facilitating N-S and S-S partnerships for knowledge sharing and capacity building.
8. Any ESTHER intervention respects the Paris Declaration, and the 2011 Busan High Level Forum on aid effectiveness, and particularly:
 - a. Adherence to national policies, strategies and global standards.
 - b. Recognise country ownership.
 - c. Close partnership with national authorities and institutions.
 - d. Support for partner country sustainable capacity.
 - e. Align with country system and procedures to the maximum extent possible.
 - f. Align with country systems for procurement to the maximum extent possible.
 - g. Work together to harmonise external support towards a coherent response.
 - h. Enhance results orientation, mutual accountability and transparency in the use of available resources.
 - i. Enhance partnerships based on the principles of reciprocity, respect and mutual responsibility.
 - j. Strengthen coordination and multi-sector approach.
9. The hospital partnerships remain the most common mode of action of the ESTHER Alliance that enables ESTHER to work in health facilities with the health professionals and other hospital staff. However any additional and complementary North/South, South-North or South/South partnership exchange is encouraged, mainly between:
 - a. Universities.
 - b. Other research institutions.
 - c. Other academic institutions (health worker education).
 - d. Civil Society Organisations and their communities.
 - e. Other potential institutions seeking to address health needs (e.g. prisons; private sector entities).
10. Each ESTHER country member will develop its national ESTHER initiative according to the foregoing articles and fields of intervention mentioned, with room to flexibly determine its exact mandate and modus operandi according to its financial means and technical capacity.
11. Each country is expected to mandate its main focal point or focal institution as its representative to the European ESTHER Alliance.

12. Country representatives are members of the board which is the governance body of the European ESTHER Alliance. They will seek to make decisions by consensus, together with Southern representatives.
13. Each ESTHER country member commits to strengthen the European Alliance, notably by:
 - a. Supporting joint events organisation.
 - b. Developing joint projects at local level and strengthen synergies between ESTHER projects at country level.
 - c. Securing its ESTHER communication and visibility.
 - d. Advocating for and positioning the European ESTHER Alliance as a European platform for development cooperation in health.
14. Each ESTHER country member commits to respect the European ESTHER Alliance's Quality of Partnership Charter principles, and to share it with ESTHER current and future stakeholders in Europe and with country partners.
15. Each ESTHER country member commits to support the European Secretariat to fulfil its missions and mandate.