

## **Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group Meeting**

**27-29 September 2021  
Virtual Meetings**

### **Summary of Outcomes and Recommendations**

Dear Colleagues,

The World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA's) [Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group \(EG\)](#) met virtually on 27-29 September 2021 and focused its discussions on the following main topics:

- An overview of new and existing areas of testing, including the implementation of Dried Blood Spot (DBS) and sample collection best practices for transgender athletes;
- A review and update of the 'Guidance for Testing during COVID-19 Pandemic' document;
- A review of the implementation of, and compliance with, the Technical Document for Sports Specific Analysis (TDSSA), including the implementation of the haematological module of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP); and
- The progress of a feasibility study on alternative sample collection programs.

The main outcomes of the meeting and recommendations are outlined below:

#### **1. Implementation of Dried Blood Spot (DBS)**

The WADA Science Team presented to the EG the latest developments on the implementation of DBS, focusing on the available DBS collection devices and the DBS analytical techniques in WADA-accredited laboratories. The EG discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the different sample collection equipment solutions, as well as the results of the recent laboratory survey on DBS analysis method development and offerings. It was agreed that the EG will liaise with the DBS Project Team and provide support on the creation of educational material on DBS testing strategies.

➤ *Outcome/Recommendation No 1:*

*A sub-group of the EG will take the lead to interact with the DBS Project Team to determine the most efficient tools required to provide guidance to Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs) on the implementation of effective DBS testing strategies, including any changes required to the International Standard for Testing and Investigations and Guideline documents.*

#### **2. Sample collection best practices for transgender athletes**

Following a request from an ADO, the EG discussed the need for further guidance on testing transgender and non-binary athletes. The EG felt that the relevant International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines (due to be updated after the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games) are likely to present a framework that individual sports can adjust to specific populations of athletes and sport-specific needs. Following the review of the IOC Guidelines, the EG recommended the publication of a Frequent Questions and Answers (FAQ) document that will

provide further guidance to ADOs on this matter.

- *Outcome/Recommendation No 2:*  
*A FAQ document will be developed to provide guidance to ADOs when working with, and collecting doping control samples from, transgender and non-binary athletes.*

### 3. Guidance for Testing During COVID-19 Document

The EG reviewed the Guidance for Testing During COVID-19 document that was published by WADA on 25 November 2020, which ultimately remained fit for purpose. As a result, the EG proposed some enhancements, for example further guidance on vaccination of sample collection personnel, based on what the anti-doping community has learnt and following the introduction of a vaccination program in most countries of the world. The document provides guidance to ADOs around the collection of samples during the pandemic, taking into account best practices to protect the health and safety of athletes and the sample collection personnel.

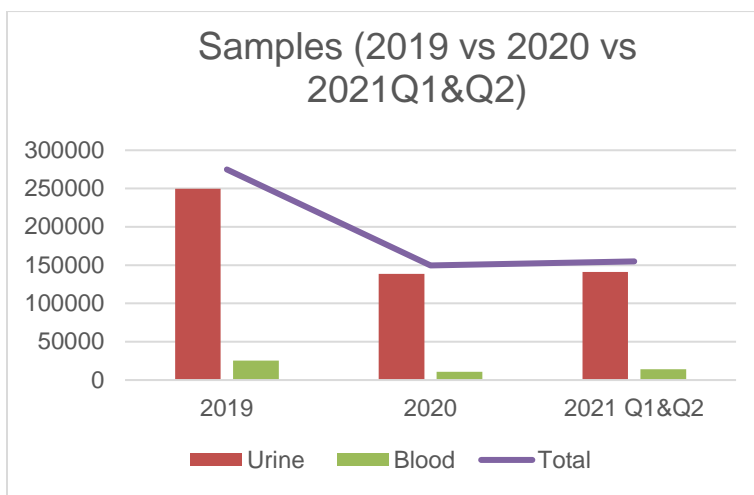
- *Outcome/Recommendation No 3:*  
*A revised Guidance for Testing During COVID-19 document will be published for ADOs before the end of 2021.*

## 4. TDSSA

### 4.1 Implementation of and Compliance with the TDSSA

The EG reviewed TDSSA testing and monitoring data for the period 1 January 2015 – 30 June 2021 and identified trends of increasing ADO adoption and greater compliance with the TDSSA requirements since the introduction of WADA's compliance monitoring program. It was acknowledged that the majority of Tier 1 and Tier 2<sup>1</sup> National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs) and the applicable International Federations (IFs) have already incorporated the TDSSA requirements into their Test Distribution Plans (TDPs). WADA will continue to monitor ADO compliance with the TDSSA through its various compliance monitoring tools.

Preliminary ADAMS testing data from the first part of 2021 shows an increase in urine and blood samples and in-competition and out-of-competition tests in comparison to the year 2020 which was highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This preliminary data also shows that the level of testing is similar (if not higher) to the level of testing conducted in the same period in 2019.



<sup>1</sup> Classification according to the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories Prioritization Policy.

A summary of TDSSA figures is outlined below for the period 1 January 2015 - 30 June 2021.

### Erythropoietin receptor agonists (EPOs)

	# of samples	# of Sports	# of TA <sup>2</sup> s	AAF <sup>3</sup> s
2021 (Jan-Jun)	35,595	93	195	35
2020	37,674	101	197	31
2019	55,578	120	244	92
2018	51,643	118	229	77
2017	48,853	116	220	85
2016	46,710	108	212	66
2015	36,218	94	183	46

### Growth Hormone (GH)

	# of samples	# of Sports	# of TAs	AAFs
2021 (Jan-Jun)	12,398	77	120	5
2020	9,932	101	154	1
2019	24,181	103	150	6
2018	24,242	99	137	2
2017	20,482	90	124	0
2016	17,538	68	111	6
2015	13,264	74	103	4

### Growth Hormone Releasing Factors (GHRFs)

	# of samples	# of Sports	# of TAs	AAFs
2021 (Jan-Jun)	44,797	96	196	3
2020	46,213	102	199	9
2019	59,406	126	234	26
2018	60,964	124	231	21
2017	57,869	119	218	19
2016	42,730	111	207	15

<sup>2</sup> Testing Authority

<sup>3</sup> Adverse Analytical Finding

2015	21,654	88	145	14
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#### 4.2 Implementation of the haematological module of the ABP

The implementation of the haematological module of the ABP for sports or disciplines with an EPOs Minimum Level of Analysis (MLA) of 30% or greater has been a mandatory component of compliance with the TDSSA since 1 January 2019. The EG reviewed statistics concerning the implementation of the ABP program in 2020 with a trend of increasing ADO compliance with the TDSSA and the Technical Document for Athlete Passport Management Units ([TD2021APMU](#)).

More than 200 ADOs are running an ABP program (steroidal and haematological) with more than 42 new programs established in the last 12 months. All Tier 1 and Tier 2 IFs, as well as Tier 1 NADOs, are set up with an Athlete Passport Management Unit. WADA's compliance monitoring program will continue to issue corrective actions where shortfalls are identified.

The EG was also updated on the progress of the development of the Endocrine Module of the ABP, the incorporation of steroid profiling in blood into the Steroid Module, and the use of the ABP to uncover sample swapping.

#### 4.3 TDSSA Applications for flexibility

Since the beginning of 2020, WADA has developed a user-friendly online system within its Code Compliance Center (CCC) platform through which an ADO can complete and submit its application for flexibility electronically to WADA along with supporting documents such as its Risk Assessment, TDP and Registered Testing Pool information. The EG reviewed the list of 10 ADOs (2 IFs and 10 NADOs) that have an application for flexibility in place and agreed that the current process and electronic submission is working well.

#### 4.4 Testing Guide for Gas Chromatography/Combustion/Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry (GC/C/IRMS) in urine samples.

The EG considers GC/C/IRMS analysis as a very effective method to detect the exogenous administration of endogenous anabolic agents such as testosterone and therefore agreed in its 2020 annual meeting that a GC/C/IRMS Testing Guide would be a helpful resource to ADOs. WADA presented a draft of the GC/C/IRMS Testing Guide for the EG's review and is planning to communicate the final version to all ADOs in November 2021.

- *Outcome/Recommendation No 4:*  
WADA will make available to ADOs a GC/C/IRMS Testing Guide upon approval of the TDSSA v7 by the WADA Executive Committee on 24 November 2021.

ADOs are also reminded that in order to further support the implementation of the TDSSA, WADA has developed three other Testing Guides for EPOs, GH and GHRFs. The Testing Guides provide information on each of these prohibited substances as well as testing strategies. ADOs are encouraged to consult these Guides to support their testing strategies when applying analysis for these categories of substances within the scope of the TDSSA. If an ADO is interested in receiving these Testing Guides, please contact WADA at [testing@wada-ama.org](mailto:testing@wada-ama.org) as they are not publicly available due to the sensitive nature of the information contained within.

#### **4.5 TDSSA monitoring tool in ADAMS.**

The EG encourages ADOs to monitor their implementation of the TDSSA MLAs through the new monitoring tool in ADAMS Next Gen. This monitoring tool provides ADOs the opportunity to review their TDSSA data in real time, identify any shortfalls and adjust their testing program accordingly. For more information on the TDSSA Monitoring tool in ADAMS Next Gen, ADOs can refer to either the [Reporting Guide to Monitor \*Testing\*](#) on WADA's website or the [ADAMS Help Center](#).

#### **4.6 Prohibited Substances in the TDSSA in 2021.**

- *Outcome/Recommendation No 5:*  
*No new categories of specific analysis are proposed to be added to the TDSSA in 2022; however, the EG continues to monitor laboratory capacity and methodology developments.*

#### **4.7 TDSSA version 7**

Following a request from World Skate, two new disciplines and the relevant MLAs for the sport of skating are proposed to be added in the 2022 TDSSA v7. Furthermore, following the addition of the International Teqball Federation (FITEQ) to the Alliance of Independent recognized Members of Sport (AIMS), FITEQ provided a proposal for MLAs for the sport of Teqball which was approved by the EG and is included in the 2022 TDSSA v7. Lastly, the 2022 TDSSA v7 includes some minor improvements in its text with regards to the ADOs' TDSSA monitoring tools and the relevant Testing Guides.

- *Outcome/Recommendation No 6:*  
*The revised TDSSA v7 with a small number of minor amendments will be submitted for approval at the next WADA Executive Committee meeting on 24 November 2021. Upon approval, the final TDSSA v7 will be circulated to all stakeholders and will come into effect on 1 January 2022.*

### **5. Feasibility Study on Alternative Sample Collection Programs**

Following the STEAG meetings in 2020, a recommendation was made to conduct a feasibility study into the use of alternative sample collection programs which were piloted by six NADOs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this study is to determine whether modified sample collection procedures could be put in place to address the limitations faced during the COVID-19 pandemic that would protect the integrity of the process and the samples as well as the privacy, health and safety of athletes and sample collection personnel. A Working Group consisting of five members from the EG and WADA staff has been established and the group has held seven meetings to date in 2021. An initial overview on this study was presented to the EG at its September 2021 meetings which covered several areas including health and safety, science, privacy, technology, IT security, legal framework, athlete experience, logistics and costs. The initial outcomes of the feasibility study raised questions that need further evaluation by the Working Group. The EG agreed for the Working Group to continue with its work and to transform its initial findings into actual operational procedures to give clarity to how the alternate systems might be structured and how they might be applied in the field, so that further evaluation could be undertaken to determine whether such procedures could potentially be used by ADOs in certain circumstances.

- *Outcome/Recommendation No 7:*  
*The Working Group will continue its work on the feasibility study into the use of alternative sample collection programs.*

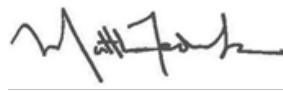
We hope you find this update useful. Should you have any comments or questions regarding the above, please contact WADA at [testing@wada-ama.org](mailto:testing@wada-ama.org).

Thank you for your continued commitment to clean sport.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tim Ricketts in black ink on a light gray background.

**Tim Ricketts**  
Director, Testing

Handwritten signature of Matt Fedoruk in black ink on a white background.

**Matt Fedoruk**  
Chair, Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group