

Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group In-Person Meeting

Summary of Outcomes and Recommendations

The World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA's) [Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group \(STEAG\)](#) met in Lausanne on 7-8 October 2025 and focused its discussions on the following main topics:

- The [outcomes and recommendations](#) from the previous STEAG meeting held on 21 November 2024;
- An update from the [2027 International Standard for Testing \(IST\) Drafting Team \(DT\)](#) on the major changes of the final draft of the 2027 IST, as part of the [2027 World Anti-Doping Code \(Code\) and International Standards Update Process](#). The 2027 IST was approved by WADA's Executive Committee (ExCo) at their meeting on 5 December 2025 during the World Conference for Anti-Doping in Sport. The [IST DT](#) also discussed the support its members can provide in the revision of the supporting documentation of the 2027 IST e.g., guidelines, checklists, templates, etc.;
- An update from the [Working Group on the Operational Independence of National Anti-Doping Organizations](#) as it relates to its progress on testing and initial recommendations that are being considered;
- Updates on the latest Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) and laboratory developments, including, but not limited, to the prohibited substances and methods included in the [Technical Document for Sport Specific Analysis \(TDSSA\)](#);
- Updates on the Dried Blood Spot (DBS) project and the recently approved [TD2026 DBS](#);
- The development of an e-sports testing strategy led by WADA's Sport Movement Relations Department in WADA's European Office;
- An update on the progress of the 2025/2026 ADAMS Development Roadmap, including the improvements and redesign of the new Athlete Center (which will replace Athlete Central), WADA's Application Programming Interface (API) connectivity, and the required functionality changes to support the 2027 IST requirements; and
- The review of version 11.0 of the TDSSA which has since been [approved](#) by the ExCo and will come into effect on 1 January 2026.

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

1. Outcomes and recommendations from the previous STEAG hybrid meeting

The STEAG reviewed the outcomes and recommendations from its previous hybrid meeting to confirm that all its recommendations were actioned.

2. The 2027 IST

As part of the [2027 Code and International Standards Update Process](#), WADA received approximately 320 comments from stakeholders via [WADACONNECT](#) on the list of changes proposed

in the second draft of the 2027 IST. The STEAG was informed by the [2027 IST DT](#) on the amendments of the final draft of the 2027 IST. The 2027 IST was approved by WADA's Executive Committee (ExCo) at their meeting on 5 December 2025 during the World Conference for Anti-Doping in Sport and will come into effect on 1 January 2027.

The key changes to the final draft of the 2027 IST focused on enhancing athlete whereabouts requirements, testing pools for individual athletes and teams, and administrative clarity to improve testing effectiveness and compliance worldwide.

As part of the review of the 2027 IST and following recommendations from WADA's [Hematological Athlete Biological Passport Working Group](#), the wait time for athletes providing a blood sample for the Hematological Module of the ABP post training or competition will be reduced from two hours to 60 minutes. In addition, the 60-minute wait post training and competition and prior to collection will apply to all blood samples collected in a serum tube (e.g., for GH, ERAs, the different modules of the ABP, etc.). Given this is a significant reduction in time for both athletes and Sample Collection Personnel (SCP), both the [IST DT](#) and the STEAG recommend that this procedural change be expedited for earlier implementation than 1 January 2027. Following discussion, post the STEAG in-person meeting, with both the International Testing Agency (on behalf of the IOC) and the IPC regarding the impact of this change as it relates to the implementation of the testing programs at the 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is proposed that such changes come into effect on 1 April 2026 post the Games.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 1:**

1. *A revised 2026 ISTI is proposed to the WADA Executive Committee in December 2025 for approval that will include the reduced wait time (from 2h to 60 minutes) post training or competition for athletes providing a blood sample for the Hematological Module of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) and a 60 minute wait for the provision of a blood sample in serum tubes for all types of analyses or ABP modules.*

3. The Working Group on the Operational Independence of National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs)

The Working Group (WG) on the Operational Independence of NADOs continues its work to enhance the operational independence of NADOs, following recommendations from the 'Cottier report'. Part of the WG's focus is a review of testing authority practices, including sample collection to address any perceived or actual conflicts of interest with the objective of improving program integrity. Best practice recommendations continue to be discussed among the WG, however, the STEAG was in general support of the direction that the discussions were going.

4. ABP and Laboratory updates

WADA's ABP team updated the STEAG on the implementation of the Endocrine Module and the blood markers of the Steroidal Module¹ of the ABP that were launched by WADA in [August 2023](#). Testing for the Endocrine Module and the blood markers of the Steroidal Module doubled in the

¹ ADOs are encouraged to contact WADA's ABP team at athletepassport@wada-ama.org with any questions and/or to request the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents for the Endocrine Module and the blood markers of the Steroidal Module of the ABP for further information on testing strategies.

second year of implementation (Sept 2024 - Aug 2025), signaling a growing adoption among Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs), with over 4,000 samples collected from 1,600 athletes for the Endocrine Module and 7,000 samples collected from 2,700 athletes for the blood markers of the Steroidal Module.

WADA's ABP team also reported the reduction in the analysis cost for the Endocrine Module (by moving from duplicate to singlicate analysis) and the increase in the laboratory capacity – the Endocrine Module is now available in [11 WADA-accredited laboratories](#). Due to the limited analytical results using the Growth Hormone (GH) Biomarkers Test for the detection of GH and the promising results of the Endocrine Module (Atypical findings or flags occurred at the rate of about 1%), the STEAG discussed the prioritization of the Endocrine Module (combined with targeted use of the GH Isoforms Differential Immunoassay) for GH analysis over the sole use of the Biomarkers method for GH analysis in blood samples.

WADA's Science, Laboratories team presented to the STEAG on the following:

- The recent WADA Executive Committee decision to approve an ABP Laboratory in Casablanca, Morocco and to grant Candidate ABP Laboratory status to the Laboratories in Algiers, Algeria, and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
- The new Technical Document TD2027ATP - Analytical Testing Procedures (ATP) will outline a classification system for mandatory and optional analytical testing procedures, aiming to improve consistency and transparency across laboratories; and
- The EPO second opinion process that has seen 170 cases since June 2024, of which 75% were confirmed as adverse analytical finding; the process is being streamlined to reduce complexity for both laboratories and ADOs.

The STEAG discussed the feasibility of creating a centralized, harmonized database of laboratory analytical capabilities and testing menus accessible to ADOs, with emphasis on balancing transparency and protection of the anti-doping system. The STEAG agreed that upgrading the ADAMS analysis database to a single and easy-to-use database that is updated regularly and consistently across laboratories will assist ADOs in planning their testing strategies, in particular where ADOs are using multiple laboratories around the world and ensuring up to date information is available on the analytical methods. It is acknowledged, however, that maintaining and keeping such database up-to-date may be challenging due to the analytical capabilities changing constantly (development of new methods, implementation of optional methods, method revalidations/improvements leading to better sensitivity, changes in sample preparation procedures, inclusion of new target analytes, etc.)

Finally, the STEAG discussed the progression toward capillary blood collection (e.g. for ERAs and GH analyses and for ABP testing) to improve the athlete experience by removing the collection of blood via venipuncture and reducing costs by eliminating the need for phlebotomists to collect blood samples. This will also simplify the transport of samples. Whilst the 2027 IST will leave the possibility for future inclusion of new collection devices, no validated alternatives are ready for global implementation. Further scientific research and supporting evidence (e.g. ongoing validation and larger pilot studies) are required in this area to further continue this athlete friendly method of blood collection.

➤ **Outcomes/Recommendations No 2-4:**

2. *ADOs are encouraged to prioritize the Endocrine Module of the ABP over the GH analysis of blood samples with the GH Biomarkers Test. As a reminder, since 1 January 2025, all samples analyzed as part of the Endocrine Module of the ABP count towards the GH Minimum Levels of Analysis (MLAs) of the respective sport or discipline. No further changes are recommended at this point in either the TDSSA or the implementation of the ABP modules.*
3. *The STEAG recommends that the ADAMS analysis database is upgraded to one single and harmonized database of laboratory analytical capabilities and testing menus that is easily accessible by ADOs, and regularly and consistently updated by WADA-accredited laboratories in ADAMS with all analyses available listed by each WADA-accredited laboratory.*
4. *WADA to continue further scientific research in consultation with the ABP Expert Working Groups on allowing the additional option of capillary blood collections for specific analyses.*

5. DBS project

WADA presented the latest developments on the DBS project roadmap and strategy for development of DBS testing and analyses. The [TD2026DBS](#) that will come into effect on 1 January 2026 includes four key analytical menus that have been standardized (multi-class, ERAs, steroid esters, and small peptides), and indicates that the standard minimum DBS sample storage period is increased from 3 to 6 months. ADAMS testing statistics show that 2025 DBS testing figures are likely to be similar or slightly exceed 2024 figures. Whilst a small number of ADOs reduced their DBS testing numbers, 16 new ADOs started DBS collections in 2025, signaling gradual adoption across ADOs and a diverse sports/discipline. The number of laboratories analyzing DBS samples continues to grow, spreading testing volumes and increasing capacity (currently 11 laboratories can analyze DBS samples and their number is anticipated to increase in 2026).

An updated DBS section on WADA's website, a DBS FAQ, and a DBS-related webinar are planned for early 2026 to improve education and support for ADOs considering collecting DBS samples. The STEAG proposed that the documentation that will support the implementation of the 2027 ISTI by ADOs include enhanced guidance on DBS testing strategies.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 5:**

5. *2027 IST supporting documentation to include enhanced guidance on DBS testing strategies.*

6. E-Sports testing strategy

The STEAG received a presentation on e-sports and the different format of competitions that athletes may participate in. WADA's current involvement with e-sports is limited, with the International Esports Federation (IeSF) as a Tier 4 Code signatory since 2014, signifying a focus on education. However, various IFs and NADOs have increased their activities on the topic leading WADA to develop an action plan and seeking stakeholder feedback on e-sports relevance, testing needs, and community expectations to guide future guidance and protocols.

➤ **Outcomes/Recommendations No 6-7:**

6. *Testing Strategies for e-sports to be discussed at the next STEAG meeting in 2026.*

7. *TDSSA v11.0 to include a comment that all relevant MLAs apply to any sport and/or discipline that has a 'physical' esport' version of its sport and/or discipline.*

7. ADAMS

Significant ADAMS enhancements are underway to support the 2027 IST changes, as well as to improve athlete engagement, and expand application programming interface (API) functionality, with a focus on security, user experience, and automation. Current development priorities emphasize authorization security and results management, with 75% of effort on authorization security and 60% completion of the Athlete Center application. The roadmap for 2026 includes completing Athlete Center, the TUE module, the Next-Gen ABP module, the Results Management Center, and introducing new Testing Orders and Doping Control modules aligned with the upcoming 2027 Code and IST.

- Athlete Center application features include simplified whereabouts entry with location search, favorite entries, attachment uploads, and error prevention mechanisms. Events calendars can be uploaded by NADOs/IFs to assist athletes with their whereabouts submissions;
- API usage fees are annual and tiered by organization size and system integration;
- DCO Central application adoption is growing, with 20 ADOs using it in 2023 and around 23,000 samples processed, increasing paperless testing coverage (with DCO Central and other available paperless applications) to over 52% globally in 2023.

The STEAG acknowledged the progress made in addressing duplicate athlete profiles and emphasized the importance of continuing efforts to further enhance data accuracy and effective testing. WADA provided the following input on the matter:

- In September 2024 an automatic merge of more than 2,500 duplicate athlete profiles in ADAMS took place. Each of these profiles had a 100% match with an existing ADAMS profile.
- The ADAMS team has created an article in the ADAMS Help Center to assist ADOs on how to avoid duplicating athlete profiles. ADOs are encouraged to contact the ADAMS team via its support line to request merging of athlete profiles.
- The ADAMS Testing Working Group developed a short ADAMS-related educational video for ADOs. 'How to avoid duplication of athlete profiles in ADAMS?'

Finally, the STEAG discussed the importance for ADOs to adopt a paperless application when collecting athlete samples. This athlete-friendly solution significantly reduces errors and improves data accuracy and flow. The STEAG unanimously supported the objective of universal adoption of paperless sample collection systems and recommended WADA to lead a global campaign for expanding the use of paperless applications by setting realistic timeframes for global adoption, considering the relevant challenges, such campaign should seek the support of WADA's Athlete Council.

➤ **Outcomes/Recommendations No 8-9:**

8. *WADA to lead a global strategy for the expansion of use of paperless applications for athlete sample collection. The WADA Athlete Council are to be approached to seek their endorsement of the project.*

9. *The STEAG recommends that WADA further strengthens the duplicate athlete profile matching criteria and merging capabilities in ADAMS. WADA to monitor and address the issue directly with ADOs that are creating duplicate profiles.*

8. TDSSA v11.0

The STEAG reviewed 5+ years of ADAMS data on the implementation of the TDSSA, the patterns/trends, and highlighted the need for ongoing monitoring tools to measure effectiveness. The data shows a consistent collection of 80% urine samples globally vs other types of samples, a split between 60% out-of-competition (OOC) vs 40% in-competition testing and an increased detection of ERAs in blood vs urine samples. The revision of TDSSA V11.0 includes amendments to the list of sports/disciplines following requests by four International Federations (International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA), International Waterski & Wakeboard Federation (IWWF), Union Internationale Motonautique (UIM) and World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC)) to add new disciplines and minimum levels of analysis and/or to revise the names of existing disciplines. The revised TDSSA v11.0 will be presented to the WADA Executive Committee on 2 December 2025 for approval and will come into effect on 1 January 2026.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 10:**

10. *TDSSA v11.0 presented for approval to the WADA Executive Committee on 2 December 2025.*

9. Other

- The Testing Figures Report in its current static PDF format has limitations for user interaction. The STEAG supported the timely publication of the annual testing figures as this is beneficial for ADO risk assessment as per the ISTI requirements and transparency of anti-doping programs. The STEAG also agreed to participate in focus groups to test new report formats to ensure usability and relevance to operational needs.
- The continued need to understand the impact of AI use on anti-doping work and programs globally was discussed. WADA welcomes collaboration on AI projects and actively partners with a 16-organization Data Analytics Working Group focused on improving testing efficiency and data analysis through AI tools. Current AI efforts include data cleaning, dashboard development for trend analysis, and monitoring whereabouts updates to optimize testing programs. WADA is also in the process of developing an AI and data policy emphasizing data privacy and governance.
- The STEAG also discussed concerns around some countries and limitations to access of their athletes combined with relatively restricted testing programs. The STEAG agreed to continue to discuss this topic at future meetings.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 11:**

11. *The STEAG members to participate in focus groups testing new Testing Figure Report formats to ensure usability and relevance to operational needs.*

Should you have any comments or questions regarding the STEAG Summary of Outcomes, please contact WADA at testing@wada-ama.org.