

## **The International Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Network (BFHI Network)**

Officially called the BFHI Network for Industrialized Nations, Central and Eastern European Nations and Independent States, the BFHI Network was established in 1997 in coordination with the WHO, by BFHI Country Coordinators and focal points from Industrialized Nations, Central and Eastern European Countries and Independent States. Its membership has active participation from 41 countries.

The primary purpose is to advance the global adoption of the BFHI and to exchange information and solutions to common implementation challenges through mutual support and collaboration. The Network leadership and committees convene virtual meetings on a monthly basis and face-to-face membership meetings on a bi-annual basis. Electronic communications are sent to the full membership periodically on an “as needed” basis.

The organizational structure of the Network includes a coordinating committee and three key subcommittees:

The External Relations Sub-Committee, chaired by Italy, with representatives from Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Spain and the US, is responsible for working with WHO, UNICEF and other global partners.

The Network Development Subcommittee, chaired by Spain, with representatives from Canada, Germany, Norway, Lithuania, Singapore and Taiwan, works to develop internal governance, operation and structural plans. A key task of this committee is to incorporate as a non-governmental organization (NGO).

The Meeting Planning Subcommittee, chaired by Belgium, has representatives from Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Malta and The Netherlands and is responsible for identifying the dates, locations and agendas for the bi-annual membership meetings.

Finally, the Network has an overarching governing body: the Coordinating Committee which is chaired by the US and vice-chaired by the UK, and includes the three subcommittee chairs and two ad hoc members: Australia and Taiwan. It coordinates activities among the committees and responds to emerging BFHI issues along with the External relations committee. Taiwan serves the additional function of coordinating BFHI issues, opportunities and concerns among the countries in the Western Pacific Region and brings their issues to the attention of the Network.

The Network played an active role in the 2016 BFHI Global Congress in Geneva. After the October 2017 release of the draft BFHI Implementation Guidance for public comment, the Network formed a Collaborative with IBFAN, ILCA, LLLI and WABA to review and comment on the draft, and worked together with WHO and UNICEF towards the final version, work still in progress. Along with other international allies, in 2018, the Network engaged in activities to raise awareness of and advocate for a strong WHA Resolution to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.