

ECDC EXECUTIVE UPDATE

Pandemic influenza (H1N1) 2009

Issue 24

Monday, 21 December 2009

Weekly influenza surveillance overview (WISO) highlights

- Nineteen countries reported decreasing rates of influenza-like illness or acute respiratory infection for at least the last two weeks.
- Most countries are witnessing medium influenza intensity with only five reporting high to very high levels. In the majority of countries, activity is still widespread.
- While the proportion of influenza-positive sentinel samples continued to decline, the 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) virus still accounted for 99% of all subtyped viruses in sentinel patients and for 97% in severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) patients.
- Approximately one third of reported SARI patients were known to have required ICU admission.

The ECDC weekly influenza surveillance overview is published on Friday afternoons and is available at: [Weekly influenza surveillance overview](#)

Weekly digest on 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) from ECDC Daily Updates

As of 21 December, the cumulative number of reported deaths since the beginning of the pandemic in EU/EFTA Member States has totalled 1652.

[14 December](#)

- Modified schedules for ECDC Daily Update and WISO for Holiday period are announced
- EpiSouth update: countries in the region are still showing varying trends while others report stable or decreasing trends

[11 December](#)

- WHO pandemic modelling group calls for more serological studies
- Selected Scientific Publications (11-17 December 2009)

[8 December](#)

- Updates from USA and Canada

Updates from *Eurosurveillance*

This week, *Eurosurveillance* published the following article related to 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1): [Quantifying the risk of pandemic influenza in pregnancy and Indigenous people in Australia in 2009](#)

A brief overview of each article can be found in [Friday's Daily Update](#).

Recent ECDC publications on 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1)

ECDC pandemic Risk Assessment updated

This seventh update (dated December 16th) is informed by the experience this autumn in Europe and North America as well as further analyses from the Southern Hemisphere's temperate countries during their winter season.

The updated Risk Assessment can be found [here](#).

ECDC Q&As on pandemic vaccines updated

The ECDC Q&As on pandemic vaccines for experts, as well as the ones for the general public, were updated on 18 December and posted on the ECDC 2009 influenza A(H1N1) pandemic web page.

The Q&As for experts can be found [here](#).

The Q&As for the general public can be found [here](#).

Past meetings and events

15–17 December: ECDC, together with the WHO Regional office for Europe, organised a workshop on pandemic response in Bucharest, Romania. The workshop was attended by EU candidate and potential candidate countries.

16–17 December: ECDC participated in the Health Security Committee Communicators' network meeting on the 2009 pandemic influenza (H1N1) that took place in Luxembourg.

17 December: ECDC convened a teleconference with its Advisory Forum members on how the pandemic is likely to develop.

18 December: ECDC participated in the Health Security Committee influenza section teleconference with the European Medicines Agency concerning future options for seasonal influenza vaccines.

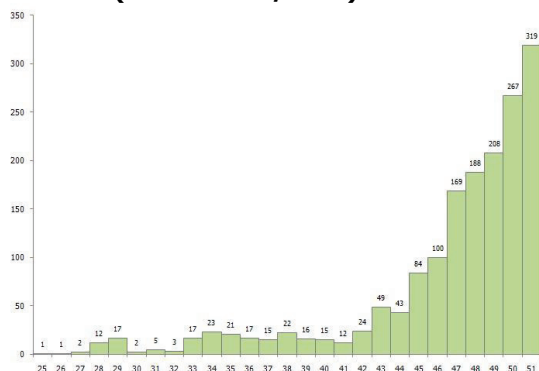
European epidemiology and key points

Nineteen countries reported decreasing rates of influenza-like illness or acute respiratory infection for at least the last two weeks.

Most countries are witnessing medium influenza intensity with only five countries reporting high to very high levels. In the majority of countries, activity is still widespread.

With regards to epidemiology, it is more important to look at trends and distributions, such as those for deaths and cases in the community.

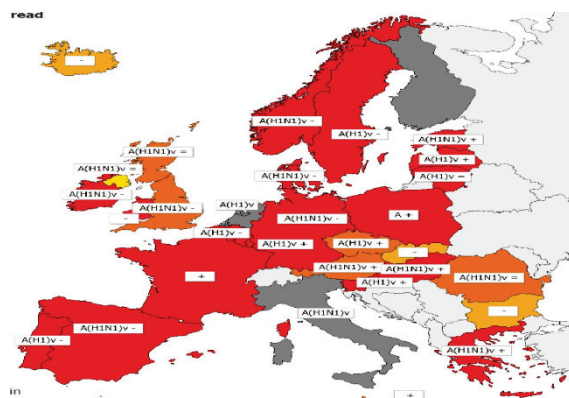
Figure 1: Deaths reported among pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza cases in EU and EFTA countries (week 25–51/2009)



This shows a weekly number of deaths from mid October onwards. In the past week, EU/EFTA Member States reported 319 deaths due to the pandemic, the highest weekly total so far.

Source: [ECDC Daily Update 21 December](#)

Map 1: Geographic spread distribution map week 50/2009 (7-13 December)



This shows how widespread influenza activity was in most European countries during week 50/2009.

Source: [ECDC Weekly influenza surveillance overview, 18 December](#)

Table 1: Countries reporting community incidence in Week 50

Rising trend		Stable		Declining trend	
Bulgaria		Belgium		Austria	Poland
Hungary		Czech Republic		Estonia	Portugal
Romania		Denmark		Germany	Slovakia
		France		Greece	Slovenia
				Iceland	Spain
				Ireland	Sweden
				Latvia	UK (England)
				Lithuania	UK (Northern Ireland)
				Luxembourg	UK (Scotland)
				Netherlands	UK (Wales)
				Norway	

Source: [ECDC Weekly influenza surveillance overview, 18 December](#)

European surveillance

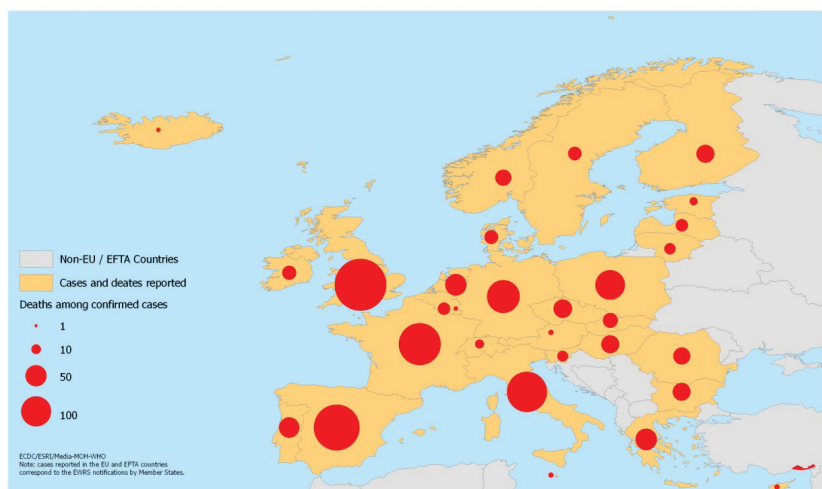
Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments are a way of scientifically determining how serious or significant threats are and therefore how much time, efforts and resources should be allocated to them. Risk Assessments are needed during a pandemic because, while there are common features for all pandemics, there are also a number of important parameters that change between pandemics including risk groups (people who are most likely to get very sick if they are infected), illness severity and antiviral resistance.

ECDC Risk Assessments are developed to help policy makers and the scientific community in the European Commission and Member States make informed and evidence-based decisions. They are publically available and updated approximately every month.

The latest Risk Assessment on the 2009 influenza A(H1N1) pandemic was published on 17 December and can be found on the [ECDC pandemic web page](#).

Map 2: ECDC reported number deaths due to 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) in Europe as of 21 December



This map shows how countries in Western Europe have been affected. In particular, how the number of deaths in Central, south-east and Eastern Europe are growing.

Effective countermeasures: The usual hygiene and personal measures should continue to be promoted. These include regular hand washing, using tissues and staying at home if sick. There is very little resistance to the drugs used against seasonal influenza (oseltamivir and zanamivir) and treatment with antivirals is working, especially if given early; however, the seasonal influenza vaccine gives little protection against 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) virus.

Vaccination: Vaccination is underway in many Member States and will be effective. Based on information received from 16 countries, WHO estimates that around 80 million doses of pandemic vaccine have been distributed and around 65 million people have been vaccinated. More than 25 million individuals have been vaccinated in the European Union. Apart from some children experiencing higher temperatures than expected with their second dose of Pandemrix (click [here](#) for the report), to date, no more significant reactions than those detailed in the marketing authorisation have been found. ECDC Director Zsuzsanna Jakab has advised all Europeans that have been offered the pandemic vaccine to take it.

Looking forward in the short-term: National and local pandemic waves may last about 15 weeks. They do not occur at the same time in different European countries nor do they occur at the same time in different parts of the same country. We can also expect local peaks to vary, e.g. to be higher or lower.

Illnesses have started to decline in the countries that were first affected. However, hospitalisations and deaths will continue rising in those countries for a while as there are more hospitalisations after a peak in a country than before. Illnesses will continue to rise in the eastern, central and south-eastern countries of Europe. Some of these are considered vulnerable by ECDC because they have lower supplies of antivirals and few vaccines. In these countries, there may be particular pressures on hospitals at Christmas and around the New Year.

Stockholm, 2009

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