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## Boosting Europe's preparedness against health emergencies

### MUDr Ouzký MEP inaugurates ECDC's Emergency Operations Centre

On 4 March, Europe's preparedness against epidemics received a boost with the official opening of a state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at ECDC. MUDr Miroslav Ouzký MEP, Chairman of the European Parliament's Environment and Public Health Committee formally inaugurated the new facility.

### Enabling a coordinated EU response

ECDC's role in an international health emergency would be to rapidly assess the threat posed to EU countries and advise on possible counter measures. ECDC Director, Zsuzsanna Jakab, acknowledged that in order to do this ECDC needs to work closely with health experts in the Member States, the European Commission and WHO.



Press conference



Unveil of the plaque



Officials in the EOC



Opening speech

Speaking at the event MUDr Ouzký said: *'When emergencies happen Europe's citizens expect national authorities and EU level bodies to work together to protect them. That is why the European Parliament mandated ECDC to create an Emergency Operations Centre.'*

The inauguration ceremony at ECDC headquarters in Stockholm was attended by representatives of the Commission, the European Parliament and EU Member States. Prominent among the VIP guests was Dr Marc Sprenger, Chair of ECDC's Management Board.

### When ECDC used the EOC for the first time: the 'Speaker case'

On 26 May 2007 ECDC received notification from WHO that a passenger with Extensive Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB) had taken flights between Europe and North America. ECDC immediately conducted a risk assessment with the Member States that was posted on its website on 29 May. The same day, the Member States asked ECDC to coordinate the contact tracing in the EU. In order to give the appropriate response to the incident, ECDC decided on 31 May to activate the PHE level 1 in its Emergency Operational Centre for the first time. On 6 June the US CDC issued a full report on the incident, which was then considered closed.



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European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control  
Tomtebodavägen 11 A, SE-17183 Stockholm - Sweden

Tel. +46 8 58 0000, [info@ecdc.europa.eu](mailto:info@ecdc.europa.eu)

Official publisher: ECDC • Director: Z. Jakab • Editor: I. Hubert

• Photo credits: ECDC pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; European Commission p. 3; Sarah Earnshaw p. 6; Emma Gutierrez de Mesa p. 8

• Printed in Belgium • ISSN: 1830-7965 • Printed on chlorine-free paper • © European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

## TB in the EU: nearly 90,000 cases annually, but a mixed picture

On World TB Day (24 March 2008), the EU funded EuroTB network released data showing that 87,806 cases of TB were reported in the EU–27 countries in 2006, down slightly from the 91,578 cases reported in 2005. Nonetheless, the rate of TB cases being reported in the EU amounts to nearly 18 cases per 100,000 people. While this is low by international standards, the EU is still a long way from eliminating TB.

The TB epidemic still differs significantly across the EU, though with some signs of convergence. The highest TB rates still tend to be found in the Baltic and Eastern European countries of the EU. However, the TB rate is falling in most of these countries. In the EU–15, the TB rates are generally low – but not always declining – and tend to be concentrated among vulnerable populations.

For more information: <http://www.eurotb.org/index.htm>

## Working behind the scene: the EURO 2008 preparation

Many thousands of people from all over the world will gather this month in Austria and Switzerland to enjoy the 2008 European Football Championship. If one of them has a highly contagious disease then the scene could be set for a major international outbreak. ECDC has been working side by side with its Austrian counterparts to support preparations for such a scenario. For example, ECDC and national public health agencies who issued a reminder to fans to ensure they have been vaccinated against measles, as this disease is circulating in parts of Austria and Switzerland. Furthermore, advanced surveillance systems are being put in place to pick up the first warning signs of an incident. Outbreaks of new or emerging diseases are rarely picked up through traditional surveillance systems, and the threat posed by the intentional release of biological agents must also be taken into account. Ahead of the event in May 2008 representatives from Austria, Switzerland and ECDC met in Vienna for a last review before the opening.

ECDC is getting more and more involved in mass gathering preparedness. Already in 2007 ECDC contributed to the development of the WHO guidelines and organised last December a meeting where experts on health preparations for international events discussed their plans for upcoming international meetings and examined the lessons learnt from previous encounters, such as the 2004 Athens Olympics Games and the 2006 FIFA Football World Cup in Germany. This year, ECDC has been linking with Chinese representatives in their preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games. As a result of these various involvements, ECDC has recently launched a call for tender to develop tools to assess the risks posed by mass gatherings. The aim is to develop a more systematic approach at a EU level as well as to support the Member States in organising future events.

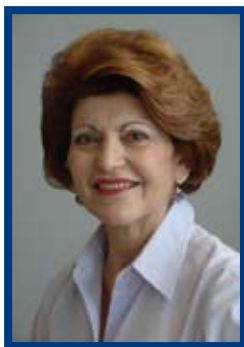
*Enjoy a healthy EURO 2008!*



## Can EU stop Tuberculosis? ECDC action plan to target further control and eliminate Tuberculosis

At the request of the EU Commissioner for Health, ECDC has published on 17 March 2008 an action plan to better control – and ultimately eliminate – Tuberculosis (TB) in the EU. Nearly 90,000 people are infected each year in the EU (see article in the left column). One of the plan's central aims is ensuring rapid detection and effective treatment of TB cases. This is seen as key to stopping TB and preventing the further emergence of Multidrug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB), or even Extensively Drug Resistant TB (XDR-TB). These hard to treat forms of TB are becoming more common in the EU, with most of the EU–27 reporting MDR-TB cases. While national governments will be the main players in improving TB prevention and control, the ECDC Framework Action Plan to Fight TB in the EU foresees an important role for the EU as a catalyst for action.

For more information: [http://ecdc.europa.eu/pdf/o80317\\_TB\\_Action\\_plan.pdf](http://ecdc.europa.eu/pdf/o80317_TB_Action_plan.pdf)



## ECDC Director meets Commissioner Androula Vassiliou

On 3 April 2008, Zsuzsanna Jakab paid her first visit to Androula Vassiliou, the newly appointed Commissioner for Health. Androula Vassiliou

was designated after Markos Kyprianou resigned from his functions on 29 February 2008. The Health Commissioner's portfolio covers three broad areas: public health, food safety and animal health. Taking over the implementation of the ambitious Health Strategy adopted in October 2007, the new Commissioner stressed, among others important challenges, the protection of the EU against global health threats such as a possible flu pandemic, the increase in new HIV/AIDS infections and the development of anti-microbial resistance.



Zsuzsanna Jakab and Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle

## ECDC and EFSA intensify their cooperation

On 3 April 2008, Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of ECDC, and Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This will provide a framework for intensifying cooperation and exchanging scientific information on topics of mutual interest including food safety, control of communicable diseases, infectious diseases prevention and emergency response. The two EU agencies already work together to produce an annual report on the state of zoonoses – diseases that can infect both animals and human – in the EU.

Read the annual report at: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu>



## Meeting of Head of Communication from Competent Bodies

On 8–9 April 2008, ECDC met for the first time with the Heads of Communication from the Competent Bodies. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss how best to structure cooperation between ECDC and the Competent Bodies in the area of health communication. Discussion focused on cooperation in the areas of scientific publishing, website development and media relations. Delegates from 26 Member States as well as from Iceland, Norway (EFTA/EEA), FYROM and Croatia (Acceding Countries) had the opportunity to hear about, and comment on, ECDC's health communication activities for 2008 and beyond.

## Strengthening WHO/ECDC collaboration for benefit of Member States



From right to left: Arun Nanda, David Heymann, Zsuzsanna Jakab

On 27–28 February 2008, Dr Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe (WHO/Europe), and Dr David Heymann, Assistant Director General WHO/HQ and their teams, together with a delegation from the European Commission, were welcomed to ECDC by Director Zsuzsanna Jakab on the occasion of the third WHO/ECDC Joint Coordination Group (JCG) meeting. The main purpose was to take stock of past and upcoming activities and initiatives and to discuss how to efficiently collaborate in the future.

The meeting concluded that the foundations laid in 2005, when the WHO/ECDC Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Dr Danzon and Ms Jakab, had helped to build close working relationships and a strengthened partnership. The progress at the political, strategic and operational levels had both widened and deepened (also with WHO/HQ), marking a milestone in the three years of collaboration.

Operational and technical collaboration had been especially successful, with some very visible and practical examples of joint efforts that had maximised benefits whilst avoiding duplication and extra burden on Member States (e.g. the joint HIV and TB surveillance for all 53 WHO/Europe countries). Other visible examples include joint response to outbreaks (e.g. Chikungunya in Italy), the fourth EU/WHO/ECDC Pandemic Preparedness meeting in Luxembourg and ECDC's support for the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Tuberculosis in Berlin. Less visible but equally important were many joint technical activities, such as work on case definitions, TB (including collaboration on the WHO and EU Action Plans), HIV, influenza, vaccine issues, epidemic intelligence, outbreak response, training and communication. The WHO/Europe secondment to ECDC to strengthen and support the collaboration will continue and there will also be a secondment from ECDC to WHO/Europe.

### Strategy and Mandate

Infectious diseases are a growing threat to the health of European citizens as the relentless expansion of trade and travel allows new or emerging diseases, and many old infections, to enter our continent. ECDC's Founding Regulation specifies the mandate of ECDC regarding threat identification and assessment. Under this regulation, the Centre shall:

- Identify and assess emerging threats to human health from communicable diseases;
- Establish, in cooperation with the Member States, procedure for systematically searching for, collecting, collating and analysing information and data with a view to identifying emerging health threats which may have

mental as well as physical health consequences and which could affect the Community.

ECDC's Preparedness and Response Unit (PRU) is responsible for performing these tasks as well as a training component that should also ensure Member States' preparedness in case of outbreak.

### PRU sections

To efficiently implement strategies against disease threats, Denis Coulombier, Head of Unit, relies on three operational sections, but above all on a diversified team. The very different backgrounds, working experiences and geographical origins of PRU's staff members plays a key role in the Unit's success.

### Field work against influenza



Mission in Irak



Mission in Turkey

Since ECDC's creation, its staff has been present in the field to address the potential threat posed by influenza. Field missions to assess the threat of Avian Influenza were undertaken in Iraq and Turkey. In October 2007 ECDC, in cooperation with the Commission and WHO/Europe, completed a series of country visits in all the 27 EU Member States and 3 EFTA/EEA countries to assess their preparedness against pandemic influenza. Similar missions were run in a few selected non-EU countries: Turkey, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. In 2008, particular focus will be put on Croatia, FYROM and Turkey. Since 2005, an assessment tool has been developed by ECDC in cooperation with its partners and has evolved since then.

In addition, ECDC, the Commission and WHO organised several workshops to ensure exchange of information among member states, assess the progress made and harmonise preparedness activities. The first workshop was jointly set up by the Commission and WHO in Luxembourg, in March 2005. Three workshops followed in Copenhagen (October 2005), Uppsala (May 2006 – organised by ECDC) and Luxembourg (September 2007). A further workshop is being planned by the French EU Presidency for later this year.

*Reports on the influenza pandemic preparedness status in Europe are available from ECDC's website at: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/Publications/Technicalreports.html>*

### ECDC's tools to track threats



Round table meeting in the EOC

Pedro Arias Bohigas, a former Information System coordinator for the Mental Health department in Madrid – involved in the response to the 11 March 2004 terrorist attack – is in charge of the 'Epidemic Intelligence and Emergency Operations Centre' (EOC – see page 1) section. Evelyn Depoortere, a former Médecins Sans Frontières' medical doctor with extended experience in emergency response in third world countries, coordinates the 'Outbreak Preparedness and Support's section. Finally, Arnold Bosman,

a public health doctor who has been Scientific Coordinator for EPIET and epidemiologist at the Dutch National Centre for Communicable Disease Control, leads the 'Epidemiological Training' section.

Other interesting profiles include: Massimo Ciotti, Deputy Head of Unit, a former WHO's staff member with a long experience of working in the field in Africa and Europe, as well as being the first seconded staff from WHO to the Commission; Paula Vasconcelos, a Portuguese seconded national expert in public health born in Cape Verde capable of liaising with experts in the 'lusofonia' world; and Hakim Khenniche, current EOC logistics officer, who has worked as a logistician for humanitarian action with Action Against Hunger and WHO.



First line, from left to right: Paula Vasconcelos, Kathleen Depoortere. Second line: Demets, Arnold Bosman, from the picture: Carmen

Tracking threats is a full time job in ECDC! To achieve this goal, a team led by PRU's Pedro Arias Bohigas developed the 'Threat Tracking Tool' (TTT). This tool is a mix of unstructured and structured information. It allows Epidemic Intelligence officers to monitor both the temporal and geographical spread of threats as well as to record all relevant information and the actions undertaken by ECDC when assessing and controlling the risk. As a result of regular evaluations, the team is currently developing the third version of TTT.

Information gathered by the team is discussed every day at an internal round table meeting. A daily report is produced and shared internally in ECDC, with the Commission (DG SANCO) and as from summer 2008, the Member States. Two weekly reports are also produced: the Communicable Diseases Threat Report (CDTR) distributed to Member States and the Epidemic Intelligence Weekly Report (EIWR) sent to the Commission (SANCO C/3). An abstract including the hottest topics is also submitted every week to the Commissioner for Health.



avian influenza and pandemic influenza (see box).

Influenza is not the only infectious disease monitored by PRU. The team also monitors emerging threats in Europe and internationally, and supports the EU Member States in assessing, investigating and responding to them. The Unit relies on a set of advanced information technology tools to detect potential threats (see page 1), with special attention to events threatening more than one EU Member State. The assessment of such threats is done jointly with experts from the EU Member States. As the chikungunya outbreak response illustrated (see box), the Unit provides assistance to EU Member States, when required. It can mobilize Outbreak Assistance Teams to help national authorities assess and respond to threats within the EU and it can contribute experts to international teams.

Finally, the Unit has a strong focus on strengthening the EU Member States' capacity for outbreak investigation and response through organising training for epidemiologists. It coordinates the European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET) which has trained more than 130 European epidemiologists through a two-year fellowship over the past ten years. Shorter courses are currently being developed to further strengthen capacity in the EU Member States.

## The activities

The Unit began its work on threat monitoring and assessment in May 2005, when the Centre became connected to the EU's Early Warning and Response System (EWRS). Since then, PRU has assisted the Commission in monitoring messages on EWRS 24 hours a day seven days a week. As avian influenza was approaching Europe in 2005, ECDC engaged in strengthening preparedness in Europe for tackling



Photo: Vladimír Příkazský, Claudia Metz Ruffer, Raket Wedholm, Katrin Leitmeyer, Marina Johansson, Massimo Ciotti, Lara Payne, Rosemarie Dahlin, Evelyn, from left to right: Anna Bohlin, Viviane Bremer, Hakim Khenniche, Steven Denis Coulombier, Francisco Santos O'Connor, Pedro Arias Bohigas. Absents Varela, Peter Kreidl, Eva Koch, Henrieta Podhorska.

## Assessment, Preparedness and Response: the Chikungunya outbreak, Italy, 2007

In March 2006, following the outbreak in the Indian Ocean, ECDC consulted experts to assess the risk posed by Chikungunya for the EU. Considering the presence of the tiger mosquito in the EU and the frequency of travel between the affected areas and the EU, the experts concluded that the risk of Chikungunya virus transmission in Europe was real. Consequently, ECDC and the Commission assisted Member States to share information, strengthen preparedness and enhance early warning and surveillance.

One and a half years later, the first outbreak of Chikungunya virus in Europe occurred in summer 2007 in the region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy. Considering the risk of spread due to the presence of the vector *Aedes albopictus* in other EU countries, the Italian health authorities agreed on a joint ECDC/WHO risk assessment visit conducted from 17 to 21 September, the results of which are published on ECDC's website. In follow-up, further preparedness activities have taken place, including risk mapping for vector establishment assessing the risk of virus introduction in the EU and the development of communication tool kits for the Member States' health authorities that include fact sheets and information for practitioners, general public and travelers to affected areas.



Mission in Italy

For more information: [http://ecdc.europa.eu/Health\\_topics/Chikungunya\\_Fever/Chikungunya\\_Fever.html](http://ecdc.europa.eu/Health_topics/Chikungunya_Fever/Chikungunya_Fever.html)

## Health experts call for vigilance against measles

### Join ESCAIDE 2008 conference in Berlin



ECDC Chief Scientist Johan Giesecke at the ESCAIDE 2007 opening ceremony

The second European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE) is scheduled for 19–21 November 2008 in Berlin. After a successful first conference in Stockholm in 2007, where about 450 participants gathered, public health professionals are invited this year to Berlin to exchange ideas on a wide range of topics related to applied infectious disease epidemiology.

As of 2008, ESCAIDE will rotate between a capital city of an EU Member State or EEA and Stockholm on alternate years. When ESCAIDE is not hosted in Stockholm, the representative of ECDC's Advisory Forum from the host country will sit in ESCAIDE's scientific committee to ensure smooth cooperation at national level. This year Gérard Krause from Germany's Robert Koch Institute holds this position.

The plenary sessions of ESCAIDE 2008 will focus on migration and communicable diseases; vector-borne infections' expansion in Europe; communication strategy, as well as vaccination. Abstracts are welcomed by 11 July 2008. ESCAIDE is sponsored by ECDC and jointly organised by ECDC, EPIET, EAN and TEPHINET Europe.

For more information: [www.escaide.eu](http://www.escaide.eu)

On 17 April 2008, Eurosurveillance published a special issue with articles on the measles situation in Europe. The authors – experts from the EU funded network EU-VAC.Net – concluded that the WHO goal of eliminating measles in Europe by 2010 could be slipping out of reach.



Parents talk to healthcare professional about vaccinating their child, Stockholm

In a separate development, ECDC warned a week earlier of an upsurge in measles cases across Europe. In early 2008, significant outbreaks were occurring in Switzerland and Austria, the two countries due to host the Euro 2008 football cup this summer (see editorial, page 2). ECDC Director Zsuzsanna Jakab said: 'Measles is one of the most contagious viruses in existence, causing serious illness and even death. If unvaccinated people are exposed to it they have a high chance of being infected. Significant outbreaks have occurred recently in several European countries, so the risk to the millions of unvaccinated Europeans is real.' The publication was linked to European Immunization Week, which ran from 21–27 April 2008. ECDC also published a European Immunization Week package on its website.

For more information: [www.eurosurveillance.org](http://www.eurosurveillance.org), [www.ecdc.europa.eu](http://www.ecdc.europa.eu)

## AMR Focal Points & Chief Medical Officers meet in Slovenia

ECDC held 2-days of meetings with the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) National Focal Points from 13–14 March in Ljubljana. On day one, the morning session included a workshop on preparations for the European Antibiotic Awareness Day on 18 November 2008. For the afternoon session, each AMR National Focal Point presented the progress of their country on AMR and their planned activities for the First Annual European Antibiotic Awareness Day.



Dominique Monnet presenting at the Slovenian Presidency Meeting

On the second day, Dominique Monnet (ECDC) presented a report of national actions on antibiotic resistance. Vincent Houdry (SANCO/C3) presented an overview of the efforts of the European Union to fight AMR. Herman Goossens (Belgium) reported on general increasing trends in antimicrobial resistance and great discrepancies in antimicrobial use patterns in the European Union. This was followed by presentations from Slovenia, France, Czech Republic and Sweden highlighting the success of their respective countries in promoting prudent use of antibiotics.

Finally, the conclusions from the meeting were presented by Marija Seljak, Director-General of Public Health Directorate, Ministry of Health, Slovenia.

All presentations are available from the website of the Slovenian Ministry of Health at: [http://www.mz.gov.si/en/predsedovanje\\_eu\\_in\\_evropske\\_zadeve/redna\\_eu\\_srecanja/srecanje\\_generalnih\\_direktorjev\\_zapodrocje\\_zdravja/](http://www.mz.gov.si/en/predsedovanje_eu_in_evropske_zadeve/redna_eu_srecanja/srecanje_generalnih_direktorjev_zapodrocje_zdravja/)

## Climate change and health: ECDC, the Commission, EEA and WHO working together

ECDC is working in partnership with the Commission, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and WHO to assess how and where infectious diseases may occur due to climate change. This includes looking at whether disease-carrying insects – such as various types of mosquitoes and ticks – could move into new areas of Europe. Last April, ECDC and WHO held a joint expert meeting that identified a number of potential threats, based on various climate scenarios.



## Mentors & Mentees programme: ensuring a soft landing for newcomers

Getting newcomers quickly and smoothly integrated in an organisation has never been an easy task. To face this challenge, ECDC developed a mentoring programme that offers newcomers individual assistance for the first 6 months of their position. 25 couples of Mentors & Mentees have experienced the programme since its launch in July 2007. The results of the survey conducted in February 2008 demonstrated a high level of satisfaction on both sides. In general, newcomers found it extremely useful to have a colleague acting as a focal point and able to informally familiarise them with ECDC's practices and standards. Mentors also acknowledged that mentoring was a nice way to get to know both a person and... ECDC better! Every staff member who has been working for more than a year in ECDC is strongly encouraged to take part in the programme, which is becoming more and more important as ECDC is still steadily growing.

## ECDC info stand goes to ICED and to ECCMID

Increasing the awareness about ECDC and its activities and making ECDC's scientific publications available to scientists and citizens are the main purpose of the info stands ECDC runs in major international conferences. During the first quarter of 2008, ECDC participated in two such conferences, the 6th International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (ICEID 2008) held in Atlanta (USA), 16–19 March 2008 and the 18th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID), held in Barcelona (Spain), 19–22 April 2008. The public health experts attending the conferences welcomed with enthusiasm ECDC's active participation in these events and demonstrated a great interest in ECDC's scientific publications, especially the first European Communicable Disease Epidemiological Report and Eurosurveillance. The fact that all scientific and technical reports produced by ECDC are available online was also highly appreciated.

For more information: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/publications.html>

## ECDC website's second generation on line



Making the information easily and quickly available to scientific and public audiences is of crucial importance for ECDC. To achieve this goal, ECDC launched a new generation of its website this spring. Among other improvements, ECDC's website now offers an improved search engine, an enhanced structure and introductory texts in various EU languages. But as progress never stops, ECDC is already working on the third generation of its website. ECDC's new web portal is likely to be launched in 2009.

## Last updates on Eurosurveillance

On April 24, the scientific journal *Eurosurveillance*, which is published by ECDC, launched a new website. The site now has a modern, fresh and user-friendly layout. An archive of articles is also available to browse and search, and more features are planned in coming months. *Eurosurveillance* averages over 50 new subscribers a week, and hopes the new website will attract more. On 7 May, *Eurosurveillance* will hold an annual meeting via video-conference with its Associate Editors: the discussion will focus on the progress made since October 2007, the new website, and the future direction of the journal.

## New Heads of Sections & Programme Coordinators

In April 2008 ECDC completed its internal selection process for the functions of Heads of Sections and Programme Coordinators:

Unit	Section	Head of Section
Scientific Advice Unit	Scientific and Technical Advice/ Knowledge Services	Amanda Ozin
	Future Threats and Determinants	Jan Semenza
	Evidence Base for Prevention and Control	Piotr Kramarz (a.i.)
Surveillance Unit	Diseases Specific Surveillance	Andrew Amato-Gauci (a.i.)
	Data Management and General Surveillance	Edward van Straten (a.i.)
Preparedness and Response Unit	Epidemic Intelligence and EOC	Pedro Arias Bohigas
	Outbreak Preparedness and Support	Evelyn Depoortere
	Epidemiological Training	Arnold Bosman
Health Communication Unit	Scientific Communication	Ines Steffens
	Public Communication and Media	Ben Duncan
	Web Services	Jouko Raatikainen (a.i.)
Administrative Services Unit	Human Resources	Jessica Sjöbom
	Finance and Accounting	Theo Orfanos
	ICT	Stefan Fassbender
	Mission, Meetings and Logistics	Clemencia Widlund (a.i.)

Programme	Programme Coordinator
Respiratory Tract Infections / Influenza Programme	Angus Nicoll
Respiratory Tract Infections / Tuberculosis Programme	Davide Manissero
Vaccine Preventable Diseases Programme	Pier Luigi Lopalco
STIs including HIV and Blood-borne Viruses Programme	Marita van de Laar
Antimicrobial Resistance and Health Care Associated Infections Programme	Dominique Monnet
Food and Water-borne Diseases and Zoonosis Programme	Johanna Takkinen
Emerging and Vector-borne Diseases Programmes	Katrin Leitmeyer (a.i.)

## New publications

For more information: [publications@ecdc.europa.eu](mailto:publications@ecdc.europa.eu)

### Surveillance of communicable diseases in the European Union. A long-term strategy: 2008–2013

This strategy on the surveillance of communicable diseases attempts to define the terms and scope of surveillance, its aims and objectives, and its organisational requirements. It also outlines ways to support the Member States and presents an implementation roadmap.

### Meeting Report: Third meeting of Chairs of Commission and Agency scientific committees/panels involved in risk assessment (November 2007)

To help improve both the quality of EU risk assessments and the public recognition of the role of risk assessment, the Chairs of relevant EU scientific panels meet annually. This report of the third of these meetings touches on issues such as harmonising procedures and following up on the impact of risk assessments. The Commission's Working Paper on Emerging Risks is attached as an Annex.

### Meeting Report: Second consultation on outbreak investigation and response in the EU (November 2007)

Outbreak response experts from across Europe met for the second annual consultation with ECDC on issues of mutual concern. They reviewed the proposal for a generic framework for standard operating procedures (SOP) and considered how best to collaborate with outbreak assistance laboratories. This report summarises the discussions and outlines the work to be continued over the next year.

### Training strategy for intervention epidemiology in the European Union (2007)

This meeting report outlines the methodology behind the development of training approaches for epidemiologists, mainly by contrasting national approaches (national Field Epidemiology Training Programmes, FETPs) with EPIET, the European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training, based at ECDC.

## Upcoming events...

11–12.06.2008

Final workshop on the assessment of the magnitude and importance of vector-borne diseases in Europe, Stockholm, ECDC

17–18.06.2008

Management Board meeting, Helsinki

8–9.09.2008

Eurosurveillance editorial board meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

25–26.09.2008

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the National Microbiology Focal Points, Stockholm, ECDC

23–24.09.2008

Advisory Forum meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

13–14.11.2008

Management Board meeting, Paris

18.11.2008

First European antibiotic day, Across Europe

19–21.11.2008

European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Epidemiology (ESCAIDE), Berlin

9–10.12.2008

Advisory Forum meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

ISSN 1830-7965



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TQ-AF-07-004-EN-C

## Emma Gutierrez de Mesa



It is with great sadness, ECDC has to announce the sudden death of Emma Gutierrez de Mesa on 1 March 2008 in Stockholm. Emma joined ECDC Scientific Advice Unit in January 2008 and even if we had only known Emma for a short time, she will be greatly missed.

A Spanish citizen, Emma conducted the first part of her career in Spain as financial analyst in the private sector. In 1998, Emma joined the Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio as assistant Professor before becoming resident teacher at the Universidad Europea de Madrid from 2000 to 2005. She then decided to move abroad first as 'Research Semester' in 2004–2005 at the TNO Strategy, Technology and Policy in the Netherlands and

from 2005 to the IPTS (JRC-European Commission) as Scientific Officer. Emma left this last position to join us at ECDC, being really enthusiastic with her new post as Health Economist in ECDC and with her new life in Stockholm. Emma was the first person to occupy the position of Health Economist in ECDC, a very exciting challenge.

We, at ECDC, and in particular colleagues who had worked closely with Emma, the Scientific Advice Unit as well as the Spanish community, had the time to appreciate Emma's warm smile, joyfulness, enthusiasm and humour as well as to acknowledge her professionalism and dedication as a scientist. Her work in ECDC will be acknowledged by the colleagues in their future endeavours to work in the health economic field. Our thoughts and feelings are with the family and loved ones of Emma, in this most difficult of times.

*Colleagues from ECDC*