



ECDC Advisory Forum

Minutes of the Extraordinary Advisory Forum meeting 6 April 2020 (via audio conference)

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Opening and adoption of the programme

1. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, opened the meeting and welcomed all the participants. The purpose of the meeting was to consult with the Advisory Forum members before finalising the 8th update of the Rapid Risk Assessment on COVID-19. The Director informed the AF that while this update does not cover any of the de-escalation strategies, it compiles some prerequisites that would be necessary to be in place once the exit strategies are considered. In addition, the AF opinion was sought on surveillance and testing. The Director expressed her hopes that the AF would agree on a more harmonised approach to testing, to enable aligned and thus easily comparable data.
2. Mike Catchpole, Chair and Chief Scientist, ECDC, presented the draft programme of the current meeting. The draft programme was adopted without changes. No specific conflicts of interest were declared with respect to the agenda.
- 3.

ECDC COVID-19 Rapid Risk Assessment: Update No. 8

4. Mike Catchpole presented a summary of the proposed updates in the 8th Rapid Risk Assessment that will be published on April 8. In addition to the short-term modelling on epi progression and HC capacity saturation, as well as risk assessment questions, a new element is introduced in this update – consideration regarding de-escalation. Noting that it might be too early to implement these measures, the AF members agreed on the necessity to address the key questions before going towards de-escalation.
5. The AF members discussed whether it would be possible to have an aligned approach and produce some kind of guidance on the use of smartphone applications to do automated contact tracing. Mike Catchpole recognised that while it is indeed an important issue to be considered thoroughly and there is a need to have a standardised approach to it, it is unlikely to be included in this particular RRA update but that ECDC will look further into this matter.
6. Vicky Lefevre, Acting Head of Unit Public Health Functions, ECDC, added that the European Commission has already been working on such guidelines, and the ECDC was consulted, highlighting that such apps should be combined with good testing strategies to produce significant value.
7. The AF noted that, at this stage, it might be too early to conduct serosurveys to estimate what proportion of the population is susceptible but that it will be a critically important exercise when it is feasible to undertake it. ECDC will continue working with the Member States proposing protocols and methods for conducting these studies.
8. Responding to a question regarding the role of children in disease transmission, Mike Catchpole mentioned that ECDC will look further into the published data that describe the younger age groups, underlining, however, that it largely depends on the quantity and quality of data reported to TESSy.
9. Some AF members proposed an additional point for consideration in terms of the de-escalation measures, namely hospital and ICU capacity that are currently mentioned only implicitly.
10. The AF members had a discussion regarding one of the community measures to be addressed in the 8th update of RRA: the use of masks for infection control in community. ECDC noted that as the issue had been raised, and recommendations had been made in some countries, it was a topic that could not be ignored in the RRA. Several members voiced their concerns about this measure, given the global shortage of masks, especially among the healthcare workers. ECDC was strongly advised to add a clear statement on the need to give absolute priority to ensuring availability for healthcare staff, as well as to emphasise the limited nature of the evidence for this measure.

ECDC surveillance strategy for COVID-19

11. Bruno Ciancio, Head of Section Surveillance, ECDC, informed the AF members that while at the moment ECDC focuses on collecting detailed information on individual confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the EU, the ambition is to start moving towards another level of surveillance, which is more population-based. It would allow monitoring incidence of disease over time in a representative manner to analyse the impact of public health measures, both introduced and removed from national recommendations. It could potentially be facilitated through strengthening of the existing influenza surveillance networks.
12. The AF members recognized that moving towards population-based surveillance is desirable, although it has certain limitations. A growing demand of tests around the world that can potentially lead

to shortages, time and resources required to scale up sentinel surveillance, and political demand in certain Member States to report on the number of the most severe, hospitalized and/or cured cases are examples of such limitations.

13. Mike Catchpole asked if there were any significant objections to the surveillance strategy for COVID-19 proposed by ECDC, and as no such objections were raised, he noted that ECDC would progress with implementation in the light of the AF's acceptance.

Closure and next steps

14. Mike Catchpole thanked all the participants for their valuable input and added that ECDC will take into consideration the points raised at the meeting when finalising the 8th update of the Rapid Risk Assessment to be published on April 8.

Annex: List of participants

Member State	Representative	Status
Austria	Franz Allerberger	Alternate
Belgium	Herman van Oyen	Member
Croatia	Sanja Kurečić Filipović	Alternate
Czech Republic	Kateřina Fabiánová	Alternate
Denmark	Tyra Grove Krause	Alternate
Estonia	Natalia Kerbo	Alternate
Finland	Mika Salminen	Member
France	Bruno Coignard	Alternate
Germany	Osamah Hamouda	Member
Hungary	Zsuzsanna Molnár	Member
	Ágnes Hajdu	Alternate
Ireland	Kevin Kelleher	Member
Lithuania	Nerija Kupreviciene	Alternate
Luxembourg	Isabel De La Fuente Garcia	Member
Poland	Małgorzata Sadkowska-Todys	Member
	Magdalena Rosińska	Alternate
Romania	Florin Popovici	Member
Slovenia	Marta Grgič Vitek	Alternate
Spain	Fernando Simon Soria	Member
	Marina Pollán	Alternate
Sweden	Birgitta Lesko	Alternate

Observers		
Iceland	Thorolfur Gudnason	Member
	Guðrún Sigmundsdóttir	Alternate
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)		
European Institute of Women's Health (EIWH)	Rebecca Moore	Member
European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP)	Inese Sviestina	Alternate
European Commission		
DG SANTE	Charles Price	
WHO		
	Masoud Dara	
	Oliver Morgan	
	Richard Pebody	
	Jukka Tapani Pukkila	