

# Minutes of the Sixty-first Meeting

## Stockholm, 12-13 June 2024

*Adopted by the ECDC Management Board at its Sixty-second meeting, 26-27 November 2024*

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## Summary of Proceedings – ECDC Management Board Meeting

The Sixty-first meeting of the ECDC Management Board (MB) convened on 12-13 June 2024 in Stockholm, Sweden. During the meeting, the MB:

- ❖ adopted the programme of the meeting;
- ❖ adopted the minutes of the Sixtieth meeting of the MB;
- ❖ approved the Memorandum of Cooperation between ECDC and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan;
- ❖ nominated the reporting officers for the Director's probationary period assessment and annual appraisal;
- ❖ approved the Final Annual Accounts 2023;
- ❖ approved the MB meeting dates for 2025 and provisionally for 2026;
- ❖ discussed the priorities for the Single Programming Document 2026;
- ❖ took note of the high-level results of the ECDC Staff Survey 2024;
- ❖ took note of the update on avian influenza vaccination;
- ❖ took note of the update on collaboration with ENVI agencies;
- ❖ took note of the update on ECDC's international activities;
- ❖ took note of the update from the European Commission on the fourth external evaluation of ECDC to be conducted in 2025;
- ❖ took note of the summary of discussions held at the Fifty-fifth meeting of the Audit Committee;
- ❖ took note of the monitoring of the implementation of the work programme 2024;
- ❖ took note of the Progress report – Overview of 2024 budget implementation;
- ❖ took note of the Budget transfers – Quarter one 2024;
- ❖ took note of the update on the assessments of Member States' prevention, preparedness and response plans (Article 8 of the Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health, SCBTH);
- ❖ took note of the update from the ECDC Director;
- ❖ took note of the update from the European Commission;
- ❖ took note of the update from the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU;
- ❖ took note of the update from the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU;
- ❖ took note of the Procedural information pertaining to the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Management Board foreseen to take place during the 62nd meeting of the Management Board (26-27 November 2024).

## Opening and welcome from the Chair (and noting the Representatives)

1. Anni Virolainen-Julkunen, Chair of the ECDC Management Board (MB), welcomed all the participants to the Sixty-first meeting of the MB, which took place in Stockholm, Sweden. She noted that it was a historical meeting as it was the last one of Andrea Ammon as ECDC Director. As agreed in the previous MB meeting in March, the incoming ECDC Director Dr Pamela Rendi-Wagner had been invited to attend the meeting as an observer and the Chair warmly welcomed her. A special welcome was also extended to Constantinos Papantoniou, newly appointed member, Cyprus, and Eveline Santos, newly appointed alternate, Luxembourg.
2. Apologies had been received from the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, the European Parliament and DG RTD, European Commission. The following countries did not confirm their participation: Greece and Iceland.

## Welcome from the Director, ECDC

3. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, warmly welcomed the MB members to the meeting noting that she was pleased to see so many members present as this would be her last meeting. There were several interesting topics on the agenda, and she was looking forward to fruitful discussions.

## Adoption of the draft programme (and noting the declarations of interest and proxy voting, if any) (*Document MB61/01 Rev.1*)

4. The Chair mentioned that some MB members had requested an update on the situation regarding avian influenza vaccination and suggested including a short update on the matter after the first coffee break. The draft programme was adopted with this addition. The Chair asked each member whether s/he wished to add any oral declaration(s) of interest to her/his Annual Declaration of Interest (ADoI) submitted previously. None were declared.

The Management Board adopted the draft programme.

## Adoption of the draft minutes of the Sixtieth meeting of the Management Board (Stockholm, 13-14 March 2024) (*Document MB61/02*)

5. The Chair mentioned that the draft minutes of the 60<sup>th</sup> meeting had been circulated to the MB ahead of the meeting. France had requested amendments in points 49 and 64 of the minutes. These had been taken into account in the version shared with the MB. There were no further comments, and the minutes were adopted with the above-mentioned changes.

The Management Board adopted the minutes of the Sixtieth meeting of the Management Board.

## Priorities for the Single Programming Document 2026 (*Document MB61/03*)

6. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, presented the priorities for the Single Programming Document (SPD) 2026. She said that there are several anticipated changes that might influence the work programme 2026: the European Parliament elections that took place earlier in June 2024 will define the policy directions for the next years and a new European Commission will take office and set its priorities in the autumn. The outcome of the external evaluation of ECDC to be conducted in 2025 (general external evaluation and assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the amended mandate) may also have an impact on the planning. Despite these uncertainties, the ECDC high-level priorities for 2026 are main pillars in ECDC's mandate which will remain.

7. The main priorities are the following: 1) Support further development of EU-level surveillance systems and continue to assist Member States in the digitalisation and integration of their national surveillance; 2) Continue to assist Member States and the European Commission in joint emergency preparedness and response planning; 3) Further intensify collaboration, coordination and communication with other EU agencies and partners in the One Health perspective, including antimicrobial resistance; 4) Support prevention and control activities, including post-authorisation monitoring of the effectiveness of vaccines, and assistance to countries to improve vaccine coverage in the EU; 5) Continue to support Member States and the European Commission in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals in the area of HIV, TB and hepatitis; 6) Strengthen strategic partnerships at the EU and international level to intensify synergies and avoid duplication of actions.

8. Based on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and considering changes in ECDC's mandate, it is envisaged that the total budget of the Centre for 2026 will be 94 295 000 EUR, of which 39 122 000 EUR for operations. The total number of staff foreseen for 2026 is 353 full time equivalent (FTE) posts (225 temporary agent posts and 128 contract agents) and five seconded national experts. Additional resources will be based on contribution agreements for the implementation of externally funded projects.

9. Following the presentation, the floor was opened for comments. Overall, the MB members welcomed the proposed ECDC priorities. One MB member noted that vaccine confidence was an important topic where a new approach might be needed. Referring to the work on TB, another MB member stressed the need to monitor also therapy adherence and to raise awareness around the limited access to medical countermeasures, possibly in collaboration with DG HERA. Concerning surveillance, it was suggested that there was an opportunity for including also social determinants of health. It was further noted that modelling and forecasting were major issues and should perhaps be identified as priorities. Climate change was also an element to look at more closely. It was also commented that ECDC's commitment to scientific independence regardless of other stakeholders could be spelled out more clearly in the document.

10. The Director agreed that conserving the scientific independence in all outputs was crucial even if ECDC's work cannot be totally detached from the priorities of the Member States or the European Commission as in this case it would lose its relevance. Responding to a question on how the changes in ECDC's management might impact the priorities, the Director said that there could of course be minor modifications, but it was more likely that the strategy implementation roadmap would change. Concerning the surveillance grants under the EU4Health programme, she clarified that these were managed by HaDEA while ECDC was providing support in terms of content implementation. The inclusion of social determinants was foreseen in line with ECDC's amended mandate and ECDC was looking at this together with the NFPs for surveillance. Lastly, the Director mentioned that ECDC has strengthened its modelling team as well as its Foresight work and climate change is included as part of One Health. She acknowledged that these were important topics, but the question was how many priorities the Centre should have, and these elements were anyway part of ECDC's work.

11. Responding to a question on the digital hand hygiene tool to be launched in 2027, Karl Ekdahl, Head of Unit, Disease Programmes Unit, ECDC, clarified that the tool was based on data from point prevalence studies and would not require any interoperability of data.

12. Concerning TB treatment, Laurent Muschel, MB Member, DG HERA, reported that HERA was in the process of contracting TB medication for children. Further details on this call could be provided if needed.

The Management Board discussed the ECDC Priorities for the Single Programming Document 2026.

## High-level results of the ECDC Staff Engagement Survey 2024

13. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, presented the high-level results from the ECDC Staff Engagement Survey 2024 carried out in March 2024. The staff engagement survey is conducted through a multi-agency contract used by 24 EU agencies; however, as this is a new contract and ECDC was one of the first to use it, no real benchmarking between agencies had been performed yet. The survey had a response rate of 83%, which is slightly higher than for the previous survey carried out in 2021.

14. The survey shows a "Total favourable" of 57% compared to 61% in 2021 and 51% in 2019. The "Total Unfavourable" (21%) has increased compared to the last survey but is lower than the pre-pandemic figure (24%). The Director then presented the key results by dimension throughout time noting that the 2024 survey used a slightly different questionnaire compared to 2021 and 2019. However, the highest and lowest scores remain the same as in the previous surveys: the highest scores are found in the dimensions

relating to wellbeing, the line manager and the job being meaningful and rewarding, while the lowest scores are found in leadership, transparency, and diversity and inclusion.

15. The People Engagement Index (which focuses on the responses to four specific survey questions) dropped slightly compared to the last survey but remains high (78%). The responses to the open questions show that staff value the working environment, the purpose of the Centre and their own job, the social relations and the flexible working arrangements, while they would like to see improvements in the organisational culture and ways of working, the internal collaboration and communication as well as the possibilities for professional development.

16. The Director then presented the areas for improvement as identified by the contractor; it will be up to the new ECDC Director to discuss the priorities with the Heads of Unit. As a first step, the survey results will be discussed in Units and Sections to thereafter agree on the areas to tackle for improvement as well as the areas of strength to preserve.

17. The Chair thanked the Director for her transparency and opened the floor for comments. In the discussion that followed, the MB members raised a few questions regarding the current policy for teleworking, whether there were differences observed in the responses depending on gender and nationality and whether an action plan was going to be developed as for previous surveys.

18. The Director clarified that the working conditions in ECDC are determined by the European Commission as all EU agencies follow the same Staff Regulations regardless of the location. The current rule for teleworking is that staff are required to work two days per week in the office. This flexibility is appreciated by staff and facilitates the work-life balance. The contentious issue is instead the possibility to telework outside the place of employment, where most staff think that the current ten days per year are too few. The survey does not ask for nationality, but it shows for instance that staff who have worked at ECDC more than five years have less favourable scores than newcomers. Concerning the follow-up, she said that action plans had been developed bottom-up in the past with quarterly reporting back to the staff assembly, but this had not led to improvements in the subsequent survey. The ASPIRE programme was one of the actions following the previous survey; the results from the 2024 survey show that staff were reasonably informed about the amended Strategy but not to the degree that it would have matched the effort so there was still more to be done.

The Management Board took note of the high-level results of the ECDC Staff Engagement Survey 2024.

## Update on avian influenza vaccination

19. Laurent Muschel, MB member, DG HERA, European Commission, said that DG HERA was closely monitoring the situation in the United States concerning avian influenza. He reported that DG HERA had just signed a joint procurement framework contract for the supply of 665,000 doses of the zoonotic influenza vaccine Seqirus as well as an option of 40 million doses over the four-year duration of the contract. Fifteen EU/EEA Member States are participating in the contract. DG HERA is not providing any recommendations about target groups as such, but the vaccine is intended for those most at risk such as poultry farm workers and veterinarians. Responding to questions on the effectiveness of the vaccine, he said that the European Medicines Agency has confirmed effectiveness against the circulating virus.

20. Taneli Puimalainen, MB Alternate, Finland, gave a brief update about the avian influenza vaccination campaign planned to be initiated in Finland a couple of weeks later. He mentioned the avian influenza outbreak that affected fur farms in Finland between July and December 2023; since then, new legislation has been in place concerning biosafety of farms, but it is impossible to fully eliminate the risks. The target groups for the vaccination will be communicated shortly but the intention is to offer the vaccine to persons at increased risk of infection such as persons working in fur farms, poultry workers, animal health staff, veterinarians, laboratory staff, etc.

21. The Director mentioned that she would come back to the topic of avian influenza in her update the following day.

The Management Board took note of the update on avian influenza vaccination.

## Update on collaboration with ENVI agencies

22. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, provided a brief update on ECDC's collaboration with the other EU agencies linked to the European Parliament's ENVI Committee, i.e. ECHA, EEA, EFSA, EMA. She noted that ECDC has been collaborating with EFSA already for many years and is now strengthening its relations also with the other ENVI agencies, in particular through the recent creation of the cross-agency One Health Task Force as discussed during the previous MB meeting in March. Other topics for exchange are digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (e.g. how AI can be used for systematic reviews). When it comes to joint Risk Assessments (RA), further work will still be needed as the other agencies are not used to producing RAs in the timeframe that ECDC does. The Directors of the five agencies also have regular meetings every 6-8 weeks to discuss topics of common interest such as staff matters including teleworking, reclassification arrangements, etc. The agencies are also looking at how to join forces to reduce duplication and increase synergies in activities.

The Management Board took note of the update on collaboration with ENVI agencies.

## Update on ECDC's international activities

23. Antonis Lanaras, Head of Section, European and International Cooperation Section, Director's Office, ECDC, gave an update on ECDC's international activities. The presentation focused on ECDC's work with EU enlargement countries (Western Balkans and Türkiye) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries as well as the collaboration with international partners such as WHO and major CDCs. In terms of future work, the ECDC roadmap 2027 foresees deepening the collaboration with and support to Western Balkans and Türkiye and advancing the cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. It also foresees strengthened cooperation with WHO Europe and defining collaboration with other WHO Regional Offices and entities. The collaboration with Africa CDC will be expanded to ensure long-lasting technical partnership. The roadmap also includes the development of a strategic plan for bilateral collaboration with other CDCs and international partners.

24. In the discussion that followed, referring to the collaboration with WHO, the Chair asked whether the amendment of the International Health Regulations (IHR) had an impact on ECDC's work and how ECDC saw the ongoing negotiations on the pandemic treaty. Antonis Lanaras responded that ECDC still needs to have an internal reflection on the implications of the amended IHR. Concerning the pandemic treaty, he clarified that ECDC is not participating in the negotiations as such but is kept involved thanks to the European Commission. One MB member noted that it would be beneficial to discuss in the Health Security Committee what support Member States and other actors are providing to Ukraine to avoid duplication. The representative from DG SANTE welcomed ECDC's international work and in particular the work on AMR and with the Africa CDC. He added that the European Commission will come back at a later stage with information regarding possible financing for the MediPIET programme.

The Management Board took note of the update on ECDC's international activities.

## Memorandum of Cooperation between ECDC and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (*Document MB61/04*)

25. Antonis Lanaras, Head of Section, European and International Cooperation, Director's Office, ECDC, presented the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) negotiated between ECDC and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan. He recalled the legal basis for the cooperation noting that the amended ECDC mandate as well as the ECDC Strategy 2021-2027 (Strategic Objective 4.2) call for an increased cooperation with international partners including major centres for disease prevention and control (CDCs). He mentioned that the national Institute of Infectious Diseases in Japan already actively participates in the network of major CDCs established in 2019 on ECDC's initiative. As requested by Japan, the bilateral arrangement will be signed with the Ministry of Health.

26. The MoC covers the following areas: 1) epidemic intelligence, threat detection, surveillance and risk assessment of acute infectious disease events; 2) antimicrobial resistance; 3) immunisation and vaccines; 4) risk communication; 5) public health education, training and professional development; 6) other relevant areas of mutual interest. The modalities of cooperation include exchange of information,

mutual consultation and/or exchange of epidemiological information in the event of an emerging health threat, study visits, and participation in meetings and scientific workshops. Both parties should designate contact persons to ensure a smooth implementation of the MoC. The organisations will meet at least once per year to carry out an annual review of the collaboration. Each organisation will bear its own costs in relation to joint activities resulting from the MoC.

27. Antonis Lanaras clarified that the terminology ECDC normally uses in similar agreements is Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) but on the request of the Japanese Ministry of Health, the term Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) is used here. The arrangement is however similar to other bilateral arrangements and all activities are voluntary. Responding to a question on the bilateral arrangement with Israel, he mentioned that the MoU expired in 2022. The last exchanges took place in the autumn of 2023 and since then ECDC has not heard back from the Israeli Ministry of Health.

The Management Board approved the Memorandum of Cooperation between ECDC and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan.

### **Nomination of reporting officers for the Director's probationary period assessment and annual appraisal (*Document MB61/05*)**

28. This item was discussed in a closed session (Members of the MB only). Following the closed session, the MB Chair announced that the MB had nominated three reporting officers which is in line with the relevant Implementing Rule (IR 25 of the Staff Regulations).

The Management Board nominated Gesa Lücking, MB Member, Germany, Jean-Claude Smith, MB Member, Luxembourg, and Philippe Roux, MB Member, DG SANTE, European Commission, as reporting officers for the Director's probationary period assessment and annual appraisal.

### **Update from the European Commission on the fourth external evaluation of ECDC to be conducted in 2025**

29. Philippe Roux, MB Member, DG SANTE, European Commission, recalled that previously the MB was overseeing the external evaluation of ECDC but, with the new legislation in place, this role is taken over by the European Commission. DG SANTE will therefore be in charge of preparing the Terms of Reference (ToR) and implementing the contract. He asked the MB members whether they would like to review the ToR before they are launched, with the caveat that the review would most likely have to happen in a rather short time frame.

30. In the discussion that followed, some MB members commented that apart from reviewing the ToR it would be useful to have a discussion in the MB (e.g. via videoconference) about topics to include in the evaluation and how to approach them. There were also lessons learnt from previous evaluations that should be taken into account. Philippe Roux responded that he would explore what was feasible, but it was important to keep in mind that the European Commission was now in the lead according to the new legislation and there were also some time constraints to consider.

31. As a compromise, the Chair suggested that those MB members who so wished could share their thoughts and suggestions with the European Commission in an informal way. She asked ECDC to share the lessons learnt table from the previous external evaluation with the MB members for information. Philippe Roux welcomed any contributions from the MB members provided these were shared with the Commission latest by the first week of July (i.e. 5 July) to be able to consider the input for the ToR.

The Management Board took note of the update from the European Commission on the fourth external evaluation of ECDC. The European Commission will share the draft terms of reference with the MB providing a minimum of three weeks for comments.

## Summary of discussions held at the 55th meeting of the ECDC Audit Committee (Stockholm, 11 June 2024), including its recommendations

32. Karin Tegmark-Wisell, Chair of the Audit Committee (AC), informed the MB of the items discussed during the 55th AC meeting that took place in the afternoon of 11 June 2024. She then gave the floor to the ECDC colleagues to present the topics.

### ***a) Final Annual Accounts 2023 (Document MB61/06)***

33. Anja Van Brabant, Accounting Officer and Head of Section, Finance and Accounting, Resource Management Services, ECDC, presented the Final Annual Accounts 2023 of the ECDC. She recalled that the Provisional Annual Accounts 2023 had been presented to the AC and approved by the MB in March 2024. The underlying transactions of Q4 2023 and the budget implementation were audited by ECA during their second audit mission on 22-26 January 2024. The Provisional Accounts were audited by the external audit company Mazars on 18-22 March 2024, and they concluded no corrections were to be made to the accounts.

34. From 15 May 2024, after the conclusion of the Provisional Accounts 2023, the subsequent events were examined to see if these potentially affected the correctness of the final accounts 2023, in particular the accruals booked. Some minor textual changes and correction of a few typos were made in agreement with Mazars and ECA; for easy reference these are highlighted in yellow in the document shared with the AC and the MB. On 19 April 2024, ECDC received from ECA the clearing letter regarding the second audit with five preliminary findings. ECDC sent its reply to these on 17 May, and on 24 May ECA's draft final report was received by ECDC and the Chair of the MB. Mazars issued a clean opinion on the final annual accounts on 28 May; this was not mentioned in the ECA report, as it was not issued yet at the time of the drafting of their report.

35. Anja Van Brabant then presented the ECA opinion on the accounts, according to which the annual accounts of the Centre present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position at 31/12/2023, the results of its operations, its cash flows and changes in net assets at year-end in accordance with its Financial Regulation and the applicable accounting rules. The revenue and payments underlying the accounts are legal and regular in all material respects. Four observations are made; these do not call ECA's opinion on the accounts into question.

36. Anja Van Brabant provided some further details on the observations noting that for the first one (related to procurement) ECA had requested additional information and following their analysis the comment would most likely change (in ECDC's favour) or even be dropped. The second one was a recurrent observation regarding high carry-overs addressed to various Agencies, nine of which have jointly decided to address a formal letter to ECA and ask the Court to reconsider its interpretation of the principle of annuality and their set criteria applied to the carry-forward of Agencies to determine if they are too high. ECDC has joined this initiative and signed the formal letter. The third observation concerns a percentage where the figure indicated in the draft report is erroneous; ECA has confirmed this is a mistake and will correct it following ECDC's replies due on 14 June. The fourth observation relates to the previous ECA comment on the 2022 Annual Accounts concerning the implementation of the HERA grants with the mentioning that this matter has now been formally closed.

37. The AC Chair reported that the AC had discussed the annual accounts and recommended the MB to approve the draft MB opinion proposed for the Final Annual Accounts 2023. ECDC had clarified that the report received from ECA (being confidential until formally adopted by ECA) is only shared by the Director with the members of the AC at this stage.

The Management Board approved the Final Annual Accounts 2023, including the report on Budgetary and Financial Management.

## ***b) Monitoring of the implementation of the work programme 2024 (Document MB61/07)***

38. Stefan Sundbom, Acting Head of Executive Office, Director's Office, ECDC, presented an overview of the implementation of the work programme 2024. He recalled that the work programme 2024 is an integral part of the Single Programming Document (SPD) 2024-2026 approved by the MB in November 2023. The activities for 2024 and their resources (human and financial) are structured along the Strategic Objectives (SO) and Action Areas of the ECDC Strategy 2021-2027. The activities are mainly implemented through projects and processes.

39. The progress update focuses on the main outputs presented in the SPD along the respective SOs. By May 2024, 93% of the outputs were ongoing and 5% completed while two outputs had not yet started. A list of all planned outputs was provided in Annex 1 of the document. Stefan Sundbom then briefly presented some examples of achievements in each of the five SOs. As from March 2024, the monitoring of the implementation of ECDC's annual work programme is facilitated via the Centre's new planning and monitoring system PRIME.

40. The AC Chair summarised the discussions in the AC. ECDC had explained that PRIME was now being used internally but some further improvements are necessary before the dashboards can be shared with the MB as planned. ECDC had also clarified that the MB will not have access to PRIME itself, but the Executive Office is looking into how the MB can have access to the dashboards. The aim is to have the dashboards ready for the next MB meeting in November. The AC had taken note of the progress in the implementation and requested further information on the two outputs not yet started. Further details on the concerned outputs were therefore presented to the MB on a separate slide.

The Management Board took note of the monitoring of the implementation of the work programme 2024.

## ***c) Progress report – Overview of 2024 budget implementation***

41. Anja Van Brabant gave an overview of the 2024 budget implementation up until 6 June 2024. She explained that from the total budget of EUR 92.9 million, EUR 74.9 million had been committed, and from the committed amount, EUR 21.7 million (23.4% of the total budget) had been paid, while EUR 4.5 million were in the workflow to be paid. These figures were comparable with the figures from the same period in 2023. A total of EUR 22.9 million had been carried forward from 2023; of this amount, EUR 14.2 million or 62.1% had been paid.

42. In the AC meeting, the ECDC Director had confirmed that the budget implementation was progressing well and there were no concerns to be raised at this point in time. The AC had taken note of the positive trend regarding the implementation of the budget.

The Management Board took note of the Progress Report - Overview of 2024 Budget Implementation.

## ***d) Budget transfers – Quarter one 2024 (Document MB61/08)***

43. Anja Van Brabant presented the budget transfers carried out in the first quarter of 2024. She clarified that the main budget transfers were mentioned under the summary part in the document; the details of the budget transfers made within the budget 2024 were listed in Annex I. EUR 500 000 had been transferred to the budget line 3005 "Digital Transformation" to cover for additional funds needed for EWRS and EpiPulse, and EUR 340 419 to the budget line 3007 "Air-Borne, Blood-Borne and Sexually Transmitted Infections" to additionally fund the VEBIS project. No transfer of funding between Budget Titles had been made during the first quarter 2024 and the item was presented for information.

44. In the AC meeting, ECDC had clarified that funding, during the Q1 budget transfers and the ones now underway for Q2, is moved around within the budget earlier on in the year in order to increase the budget implementation. The budget that became available is mainly due to left over funding from meetings that have taken place or new contracts ECDC procured for a lower price than the initial budget foreseen.

The Management Board took note of the Budget transfers – Quarter one 2024.

## ***e) Reporting on additional topics discussed in the AC***

### ***i) Update on Audit Activities and on the Status of Audit Observations***

45. With regards to the regular update on audit activities, the AC Chair reported that no new observations had been received by the ECDC since the previous MB meeting. Seven observations are currently open of which five should be closed by the end of 2024 and two in 2025. The pending ECA observation on the 2022 Annual Accounts is proposed to be closed by ECA. ECDC had informed the AC that the IAS audit on "preparation, review and validation of external communication content" might be postponed. ECDC had also explained that the work on the IAS recommendation on the Joint Reclassification Committee (JRC) is on-going, and there are discussions with the Staff Committee on a new system for re-classifications. The AC will carefully follow the progress on the implementation of audit observations.

### ***ii) Revised indicators for the Internal Control Framework***

46. The AC Chair mentioned that the AC had taken note of the 16 new indicators added to the ECDC Internal Control Framework (ICF) for characteristics 11.1, 11.2. and 13.1 and that one indicator had been deleted. ECDC clarified that most of the indicators were needed, being in the area of Information Security, and that they should be possible to collect without too much administrative burden. The AC had endorsed the new indicators added to, and the one deleted from, the ICF.

### ***iii) Amendment of the MB Rules of Procedure and the AC Mandate***

47. The AC had discussed the best way forward regarding the previously suggested amendments to the MB Rules of Procedure and the AC Mandate. As previously requested by the AC, ECDC provided examples of audit committee mandates from other EU agencies. Based on the information provided, the AC asked ECDC to contact EMA to further clarify their chairing arrangements. The AC proposes to form a small group (including one AC member and two MB members) to work on the two documents. Considering the upcoming MB membership renewal, it is suggested to agree on the composition of the group during MB62 in November 2024. The working group would make a proposal to the AC in March 2025, with a formal decision foreseen in the MB in June 2025.

48. The MB Chair expressed her support for the proposal to form a small working group in November and encouraged those members that will continue in the MB to consider volunteering for the group.

The Management Board took note of the update from the Audit Committee and agreed to form a small group during MB62 to work on the amendment of the MB Rules of Procedure and AC Mandate.

## **Update from the ECDC Director**

49. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, gave a brief update on recent activities. As mentioned during the first meeting day, she confirmed that the issue regarding the annual accounts 2022 had now been closed and as Director she had received discharge from the European Parliament in April.

50. The Director also informed the MB members of two recent IT security incidents informed by the Computer Emergency Response Team for EU institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU). In the first one, ECDC TESSy accounts alongside their plaintext passwords were discovered in the context of a law enforcement operation. ECDC immediately changed the passwords and initiated an assessment. There is no indication of leakage or unauthorised use of any account, but ECDC is nonetheless looking into how these accounts can be further secured and most likely multifactor authentication will be introduced. The second case concerns a cyberattack against the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) reported as a significant incident. CERT-EU has recommended to stop all digital communication with CEPOL until further notice. ECDC has no close collaboration with CEPOL, but it is worthwhile reflecting on the implications of a similar incident in ECDC and possible measures to increase the security.

51. Referring to the discussion the previous day on avian influenza vaccination, the Director briefed the MB about recent reports on avian influenza published jointly with EFSA. She also presented the results of a survey carried out in the Member States regarding their approach to seasonal and zoonotic influenza vaccination of people at increased risk of exposure.

52. Lastly, as this was her last MB meeting, the Director said that she wished to come back to the presentation she had provided during her interview for the Director's position in 2017. At the time she had

highlighted a number of political, economic, societal, and technological challenges that she saw and how these would impact ECDC in the next five years. She had noted the need to focus on activities adding the greatest value for the stakeholders as well as the need to develop strategic partnerships to increase synergies and avoid duplication of work, and to streamline the organisation. In some areas, such as digitalisation, the pandemic helped to accelerate the developments. Overall, she felt that the Centre had made good progress in the areas she had outlined as targets for 2022. She thanked the MB members for all their support over the years and added that when there was criticism it was always constructive and helped ECDC improve further.

53. The Chair thanked the Director for her presentation noting that Andrea Ammon was the longest serving ECDC Director so far having served two years as Acting Director followed by seven and a half years as Director. During this time, she had led the organisation through an unprecedented pandemic. On behalf of the entire MB, she thanked Andrea Ammon for her engagement and dedication over the years.

The Management Board took note of the update from the ECDC Director.

## **Update on Article 8 assessment of Member States' prevention, preparedness and response plans**

### ***a) Assessment visit to Belgium***

54. Vicky Lefevre, Head of Unit, Public Health Functions, ECDC, gave an update on the assessment visit conducted in Belgium on 13-17 May 2024. The visit is part of the assessment of Member States' prevention, preparedness, and response plans to be performed in accordance with Article 8 of the Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health (SCBTH). The visit was overall a positive experience for the assessment team, and she wished to thank the Belgian colleagues for their openness in the assessment and the efficient organisation of the mission. She then described the process for initiating the assessment visit and the composition of the assessment team noting that the inclusion of an expert from another Member State was considered very useful at both sides. Several online meetings were held before the assessment to identify documents and to plan the visit. The Article 7 questionnaire is used as basis for the assessment, which looks at 16 capacities. Vicky Lefevre then explained the schedule for the one-week mission in Brussels; based on the lessons learnt, some adjustments will be made for future visits. One conclusion was that slightly more time was needed to go over the 11 non-in-depth capacities. The first draft report had been sent to Belgium two weeks after the visit with a three weeks' deadline for comments. Vicky Lefevre mentioned that an assessment visit was currently ongoing in Finland and there might be other learnings arising from this assessment.

### ***b) Member State experience***

55. Lieven De Raedt, MB Member, Belgium, reported that the assessment visit had been a highly positive experience for his country at both federal and federated level. The discussions were inclusive and transparent and a good learning exercise for all those involved. The assessment was work-intensive but worthwhile and the ECDC team showed a high level of expertise. The exercise requires a thorough preparation, and it is worth noting that the self-assessment guiding questions are the starting point for ECDC. The conclusion on the Belgian side was that the five core competencies received an in-depth evaluation but it was recommended to reflect on how the 11 non-in-depth competencies could be covered better. He agreed that having an expert from another Member State in the team was enriching for both sides. With regards to the draft report compiled by ECDC, he noted that the conclusions were specific, clear and implementable. In terms of the process, he questioned the possibility of Member States to amend the conclusions and felt that ECDC should have the final word on the assessment. He said that roughly 110 persons were involved in the visit on the Belgian side. He encouraged other Member States to engage and see the assessment as an opportunity.

56. Following the presentations a few comments were made. Referring to the ongoing assessment visit in Finland, the MB Alternate from Finland agreed that the assessment was valuable and a good training opportunity for experts from different sectors. One challenge was that in his country preparedness was looked at much more broadly than only covering public health. A similar approach with public health being integrated into the generic preparedness is observed in some other countries as well. One MB member

noted that it would be helpful to receive feedback from other Member States on the preparatory work, resources, team composition, assessment agenda, etc., and suggested putting in place a mechanism for sharing experiences in a structured way.

57. Responding to a question on the profile of the Member State experts to be included in the assessment team, Vicky Lefevre said that the main expertise sought was preparedness and added that there were sufficient experts identified for the rest of 2024 and part of 2025. She suggested that the Health Security Committee (technical group for preparedness) was probably a suitable forum for sharing experiences, as well as among NFPs for preparedness and possibly within the MB. Concerning the coverage of other threats beyond public health, Vicky Lefevre said that the assessment had an all-hazards approach although mainly focusing on public health. The climate change part was covered by One Health and experts from SANTE animal health had been involved in the document review. Concerning chemicals, ECHA had been invited to participate in the visit in Finland.

The Management Board took note of the update on the Article 8 assessment of Member States' prevention, preparedness and response plans.

## **Management Board meeting dates 2025 and 2026 (*Document MB61/09*)**

58. Stefan Sundbom, Acting Head of Executive Office, Director's Office, ECDC, presented the proposed MB meeting dates for 2025 and 2026. The MB agreed with the proposed schedule of meetings in 2025 as below:

- MB63: 27-28 March 2025
- MB64: 17-18 June 2025
- MB65: 25-26 November 2025

In addition, the Management Board took note of the following meeting dates proposed for 2026:

- MB66: 26-27 March 2026
- MB67: 16-17 June 2026
- MB68: 24-25 November 2026

The Management Board approved the proposed meeting dates for 2025 and provisionally for 2026.

## **Update from the European Commission**

59. Philippe Roux, DG SANTE, European Commission, briefed the MB about ongoing activities in the area of health. Concerning preparedness training, he mentioned that an inventory of existing training programmes has been finalised as part of the EPIC 11 project and will be available on ECDC's Virtual Academy Platform (EVA). He also mentioned the ongoing second round of calls for EU reference laboratories (EURLs) with deadline 14 August 2024.

60. Laurent Muschel, DG HERA, European Commission, mentioned that ECDC and HERA were currently reviewing their bilateral working arrangement, and no major changes were foreseen. He also reported on the ongoing work related to joint procurement (mpox and Covid-19 vaccines), medical countermeasures and stockpiling and mentioned that HERA was starting negotiations for the purchase of antibiotics. He also mentioned upcoming simulation exercises to test protocols and overall infrastructure.

The Management Board took note of the update from the European Commission.

## **Update from the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU**

61. Lieven De Raedt, MB Member, Belgium, reported on the main achievements of the Belgian EU Presidency. He mentioned that one of the main ambitions of the Presidency had been to reflect on the future EU health agenda and to discuss current and upcoming challenges, such as crisis preparedness,

medicine shortages and health systems capacities. Key focus was put on the governance of crisis preparedness. Another topic high on the agenda was AMR where the need for a more ambitious and structured approach was identified. The impact of climate change will also be included in the Council Conclusions to be adopted shortly.

The Management Board took note of the update from the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

## Update from the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU

62. Ágnes Dánielisz, MB Member, Hungary, gave a brief update on the Hungarian EU Presidency starting 1 July. She explained that the priorities were currently being defined and therefore no detailed information was available as yet. It is however foreseen that AMR will be high on the agenda; in this context, there will also be focus on hand-hygiene and waste-water surveillance. Other topics that will be covered are rare diseases, digitalisation and continued work on pharmaceutical legislation.

The Management Board took note of the update from the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

## Procedural information pertaining to the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Management Board (*Document MB61/10*)

63. The Chair recalled that elections of MB Chair and Deputy Chair will take place during the next MB meeting in November. In accordance with the MB Rules of Procedure, nominations shall be sent to the MB secretariat four weeks ahead of the meeting, i.e., by 29 October 2024. The Chair mentioned that she had served three terms as MB Chair and would not run for a fourth term. During her mandate she had tried to improve the ways of working of the MB but there is always room for further improvements. In this context, one MB member suggested that a back-to-back workshop or information session for newcomers could be considered. Another member mentioned that it would be useful to reflect on how ECDC worked during COVID and more broadly on how to work effectively during crisis noting that there could have been more exchange between Member States during the pandemic. The Chair suggested keeping these points in mind for the next MB meeting.

The Management Board took note of the procedural information pertaining to the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Management Board.

## Any other business

64. The Chair thanked all the MB members for their active participation during the meeting. She also thanked the interpreters and the MB Secretariat for their support.

65. The following MB meeting is scheduled to take place in Stockholm on 26-27 November 2024.

## Annex: List of Participants

Country/Organisation	Representative	Status
Austria	Sigrid Kiermayr	Member
Belgium	Lieven De Raedt	Member
Bulgaria	Angel Kunchev	Member
Croatia	Bernard Kaić	Member
Cyprus	Constantinos Papantoniou	Member
Czech Republic	Matyáš Fošum	Alternate
Denmark	Gideon Ertner	Alternate
Estonia	Heli Laarmann	Member
Finland	Anni Virolainen-Julkunen ( <i>Chair</i> )	Member
	Taneli Puumalainen	Alternate
France	Anne-Catherine Viso	Alternate
Germany	Gesa Lücking	Member
Hungary	Ágnes Dánielisz	Member
Ireland	Colette Bonner	Member
Italy	Francesco Maraglino	Member
Latvia	Dzintars Mozgis	Alternate
Lithuania	Audrius Ščeponavičius	Member
Luxembourg	Jean-Claude Schmit	Member
	Éveline Santos	Alternate
Malta	Patricia Vella Bonanno	Member
Poland	Michał Ilnicki	Alternate
Portugal	Rita Sá Machado	Member
Romania	Amalia Serban	Member
Slovenia	Mario Fafangel	Member
Spain	Pedro Gullón Tosio	Member

Sweden	Karin Tegmark Wisell	Member
	Camilla Wallander	Alternate
<b>European Commission</b>		
DG SANTE	Philippe Roux	Member
DG HERA	Laurent Muschel	Member
<b>EEA Countries</b>		
Liechtenstein	Silvia Dehler	Member