

**ECDC Management Board**

**MB First Extraordinary/Minutes  
13 November 2008**



**Minutes of the First Extraordinary Meeting of the  
ECDC Management Board  
Stockholm, 23 September 2008**

*Adopted by the Management Board at its Fourteenth meeting, 13-14 November 2008*

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## **Summary of Decisions**

The Management Board:

- Adopted the minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Management Board (Helsinki, 17-18 June 2008); and
- Adopted the document “Conclusions and Recommendations of the MB based on the External Evaluation of ECDC”, after requesting some changes.

The Management Board also:

- Noted the information on the upcoming election of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board, during the next MB meeting on 13-14 November 2008 in Paris.

## **Opening and Welcome by the Chair**

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all participants.
2. A special welcome was extended to the new Member from Hungary, Dr Melinda Medgyaszai, who attended the ECDC Management Board for the first time.
3. The Chair noted that apologies were received from Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein and DG Research, whose members had been unable to attend this extraordinary session.
4. The Chair recalled that the mandate of the present Management Board would cease at the end of September 2008. The present session was therefore extremely important, since the central item on its agenda concerned the Board's independent assessment of the first external evaluation of ECDC's performance. Hopefully, it would be possible to reach a consensus on that issue.

## **Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda**

*(documents MBExtraordinary 1/2, MBExtraordinary 1/3)*

5. The agenda was adopted without change.

## **Item 2: Adoption of the draft minutes of the 13th meeting of the Management Board in Helsinki, 17-18 June 2008**

*(document MBExtraordinary 1/4)*

6. The draft minutes included all comments which had been received from members, and were adopted without change.

## **Item 3: Conclusions and Recommendations of the MB on the External Evaluation of ECDC**

*(document MBExtraordinary 1/5 Rev 1)*

7. The Chair recalled the work of both the MB Steering Committee and the MB Drafting Group in connection with the external evaluation. The Drafting Group, whose mandate had been to independently examine the contractor's conclusions and recommendations on behalf of the full Board, had met the day before to conclude its work.
8. The document now in front of the Board (MBExtraordinary 1/5 Rev.1) was the result of that final meeting, and replaced the earlier final draft which had been circulated electronically to members on Saturday, 20 September 2008.
9. On a question of procedure, it was confirmed that the full membership of both the Steering Committee and the Drafting Group would be annexed to the Board's report.

## **Mandate and Method of Work of the Drafting Group**

10. The Chair then invited Mrs Irene Nilsson-Carlsson (Sweden) to present the method of work of the Drafting Group and the structure of its report to the Board.

11. Mrs Nilsson-Carlsson recalled the Drafting Group's mandate and the work carried out during the Group's three meetings over the last two months. Although extensive minutes were available from the first two meetings, the report itself, which was now presented to the Board for its adoption, was only nine pages: a brief two and a half page summary, followed by a six-page main report which provided an independent assessment of each of the 13 Conclusions presented by the contractor in his executive summary.

12. Certain inconsistencies in the contractor's final report had unfortunately been noted both by the Steering Committee and by the Drafting Group, whereby a number of important issues covered in the main report had not been carried forward into his executive summary, and vice versa.

13. The important issue of a potential extension of ECDC's mandate, specifically highlighted in Article 31 of the Founding Regulation, had also not been adequately analysed in view of both the Steering Committee and the Drafting Group.

### **Work of ECDC**

14. The Chair invited Professor Hubert Hrabcik (Austria) to present the general conclusions and recommendations regarding ECDC's work and performance to the Board.

15. Professor Hrabcik stressed the conclusions of the contractor that ECDC had, after only two years of operation, made a significant contribution to the fight against communicable diseases in Europe, and had already established itself as an independent centre of excellence. The Board fully endorsed those conclusions.

16. The medium-term funding of the Centre, established in coordination with the Commission, and as reflected in the Financial Perspective 2007-2013, was also adequate for the current mandate of ECDC.

17. While the overall conclusions on performance were very positive, the Centre would need to focus on further improvements in efficiency and its governance structure, in line with its continuing growth. Such improvement opportunities included a close watch on the Centre's matrix structure, as disease-specific projects came more to the foreground, as well as a review of the role of the Advisory Forum and even of the Management Board, to see if alternative ways to prepare decisions and facilitate consensus could be found. Dr Hrabcik encouraged the Board to consult widely and study those issues carefully in order to reach the best possible outcome for the smooth functioning of the Centre also in the future.

### **Partnerships and relations with Member States**

18. On the question of partnerships and relations with Member States, the Centre had already a clear presence on the international stage. Further work to strengthen the awareness of the European institutional environment and national public health systems was however required, as was the need to take Member States' expectations and capacities into account when scientific information, data and experts were requested as part of the Centre's mandate.

### **Risk assessment, risk management and risk communication**

19. Professor Minerva-Melpomeni Malliori (European Parliament and Deputy Chair of the MB), presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations under this section.

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20. From the external evaluation, it had become clear that the distinction between risk assessment and risk management was not always clear to everyone. Although to all those closely associated with ECDC the situation was clear: the Centre's role was risk assessment, and it only had an advisory role in risk management if requested to contribute to this by a Member State or by the Commission. It was important that this distinction always be recalled in ECDC's work settings and interactions with stakeholders.

21. It was also important that the Centre's risk communications and related scientific advice was always drafted in a language that was appropriate and easy to understand for national and Community policy makers.

22. Finally, although the Member States would generally be the first source of information for the citizens of each country, ECDC had a role to play in keeping the general public informed about the Centre's role, activities and results, in line with Article 12 of the Founding Regulation.

### **Extension of ECDC's mandate**

23. Ms Liz Woodeson (United Kingdom) then presented the final major section of the report, in which a possible extension of ECDC's mandate had been discussed.

24. There were several aspects to the question of extension of the mandate: as far as adding new communicable diseases to the Centre's portfolio was concerned, this was already foreseen in Article 3 of the Founding Regulation. Such decisions could therefore be decided by the Director as and when new health threats were to arise, as long as they were guided by an analysis of added value to European Member States. The same principle would apply to a potential extension of ECDC's geographical mandate beyond the European Member States.

25. An extensive discussion had taken place in the Drafting Group regarding the Centre's future role in microbiology and the work of reference laboratories in Member States. The Board expected the Centre to further clarify its role in that important area, with the support of national microbiology focal points and competent bodies, and looked forward to a report on the matter at one of its future meetings.

26. As far as extension of ECDC's mandate beyond communicable diseases, it was clear that the Commission, in consultation with the Member States, would be managing any potential study to that effect, based on a careful analysis of the needs at the EU level.

27. After much deliberation, an important set of recommendations from the MB to the Commission had been formulated on the extension issue as follows:

- a. From an organisational and financial perspective, ECDC should focus on communicable diseases over the next few years, in line with the Strategic Multi-annual Programme for 2007-2013;
- b. Any possible extension of the mandate of ECDC would be contingent on adequate and long-term funding, and should be reviewed under the leadership of the Commission, in preparation for the next Financial Perspective; and
- c. As far as health monitoring and health information was concerned, a rigorous analysis of who does what, of existing systems across Europe, and the needs at

EU level, should be carried out before this issue could be properly addressed, including a careful analysis of cost implications.

### **Concluding discussion**

28. In the discussion which followed the above presentations, the point was made that the present document submitted to the MB for review was a clear improvement to the final draft circulated electronically only three days earlier. The improvements, both to the text as well as to the structure of the report, thus demonstrated excellent and collegiate team work among members of the Drafting Group.

29. While there had been differing views on the need to recommend changes to the Founding Regulation, as indeed advocated by the contractor, the present language in the report had struck a middle ground, thus opening up for a period of review and consideration of alternative options by the MB, before a final recommendation to the Commission on that sensitive subject were to be made.

30. In order to clearly identify in the report the MB's recommendations and action points, it was agreed that these would be highlighted in the text, and thus be distinguished from the general conclusions and discussion.

31. The Chair then invited members of the MB to review the report, section-by-section, in order to facilitate its eventual adoption.

32. After some relatively minor changes, the Chair invited the MB to vote on adoption of the report by a show of hands. The report, as amended, was adopted by consensus.

33. On a point of order, the representatives of the Commission explained that they had abstained from voting, as it would have been inappropriate for them to cast a vote on a set of conclusions and recommendations ultimately addressed to the Commission itself.

34. Before closing the discussion, the Chair stated that the approved report would subsequently be transmitted by him to the Commission, with a covering letter which would also mention that it was the Board's view that intervals of five years would be appropriate for future external evaluations of ECDC's performance. It was agreed that the period 2008-2012 should be recommended, as this would serve as input to the next financial framework, starting in 2014. If this was agreed to by the Commission, preparatory work for the next external evaluation would have to be initiated in 2011.

35. It was so agreed.

### **Item 4: Achievements of the Management Board**

36. The Director of ECDC presented an overview of the work of the Management Board over the last four years, since the Centre's embryonic inception which took place at the first inaugural meeting of the MB in September 2004. Today's Extraordinary Meeting was thus a fitting opportunity to look back on the MB's work and achievements, culminating with the consensus opinion just reached on ECDC's first external evaluation. The positive outcome of

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that exercise would guide the work of the Centre for many years to come, and would also set a large part of the agenda for the MB's own programme of work.

37. In the Director's opinion, the success of the ECDC, as documented through the evaluation, was in no small measure due to the positive and supportive role of the MB and the fact that the Board had always met key deadlines which had been critical to the Centre's development. The guidance of the Board had been invaluable to her, whether the issues concerned disease surveillance, multi-annual strategic framework, or internal control standards.

38. She extended a special thanks to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board, Dr Marc Sprenger and Professor Meni Malliori, for the extraordinary amount of time and energy they had devoted to support ECDC over the last four years.

39. In closing, she paid tribute to the excellent support from ECDC's host country, Sweden, and in particular the support of the late mayor of Solna, Mr Anders Gustav, at the start of the Centre's existence. His far-sighted and generous offer to let ECDC use empty offices at the Solna City Hall had been invaluable in getting the Centre off to a quick start during the first six months of its existence.

**Item 5: Information on Upcoming Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Management Board**

40. As the term of office for the present Board would expire on 27 September 2008, new designations of Members were required. Reminders to this effect had been sent out by the Director. A handful of countries had not yet responded, and the present representatives were requested to take the matter up with their national authorities as soon as possible, in view of the rapidly approaching closing date.

41. The Board was informed by the Chair that he would not be available for re-nomination to a new term as Chair of the MB.

42. Elections of a new Chair and Vice Chair would take place by secret ballot, in accordance with established rules of procedure, at the next meeting of the Board, which will convene in Paris on 13-14 November 2008.

**Item 6: Other Matters and Closure**

43. Dr Françoise Weber (France) extended a warm welcome to all those members of the present Board who would also be attending the next meeting of the MB in Paris.

44. The meeting would be held on 13-14 November 2008 at the Centre de Conférences International Kléber in the centre of Paris, and it was expected that the Minister of Health would honour the meeting with her presence.

45. The Chair thanked all participants for what he saw as a very productive and harmonious meeting. The consensus decision on the MB's report to the Commission on the external evaluation of ECDC would in his view be of key importance to a positive future for the Centre, in the work to strengthen public health in Europe.