



Annual Report of the Director Summary 2008

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**Annual Report of the Director
Summary
2008**



Marc Sprenger, former Chair of the Management Board, ECDC Director Zsuzsanna Jakab and Dr Miroslav Ouzký, member of the European Parliament, at the inauguration of the ECDC Emergency Operation Centre, in March 2008.

2008: A year of consolidation and expansion

Since its establishment in 2005, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has experienced dynamic growth. In 2008, the Centre reached a phase of both consolidation and continuing expansion, and is now well on its way to becoming a 'centre of excellence' in the fight against infectious diseases in Europe, as well as a prime source of information for the scientific community.

A number of key achievements demonstrated that in 2008 ECDC delivered increased output and successfully addressed the need for a strengthened response to the threat of communicable diseases in Europe. The Centre consolidated its public health functions, enhanced the capacities of its disease-specific programmes, further developed partnerships, and improved managerial structures.

The results of an independent evaluation conducted by external consultants and finalised in 2008 further corroborate the Centre's achievements. The evaluation found that ECDC established a 'clear presence on the international stage' and made a 'significant contribution' to the fight against infectious diseases.

The unabridged Annual Report of the Director 2008 describes in detail ECDC's developments and outputs during the past year. This summary highlights the main achievements.

Consolidation of the public health functions

In 2008, ECDC further consolidated its public health functions in order to fully comply with its mandate as specified in the Centre's Founding Regulation. This entailed the strengthening of its activities in the areas of surveillance, scientific support, preparedness and response, and health communication.

Surveillance

A long-term vision and strategy on the future surveillance of communicable diseases in the EU was developed and adopted in 2008. Main achievements in the area of surveillance included:

- the launch of TESSy ('The European Surveillance System') and the continued development of the system for enhanced surveillance;
- the addition of more TESSy users: there are now 115 users from 29 countries, with the database holding more than 1.3 million records;
- the transfer of three more surveillance networks to ECDC, in addition to the five networks already transferred before 2008; and
- a commitment to focus on improved data quality and comparability between Member States — key for the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Scientific support

In its efforts to become a catalyst for public health research and to serve as a prime source of scientific advice on communicable diseases in Europe, ECDC, in 2008:

- published 21 scientific reports on specific diseases, the impact of climate change on epidemiology, and the future burden of communicable diseases in Europe;



Johan Giesecke, Chief Scientist of ECDC, at the ESCAIDE conference, in November 2008.

- organised and held the second European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE) in Berlin, which was attended by more than 500 health experts from all over Europe;
- published scientific guidance on the introduction of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines in Europe and on priority risk groups for influenza vaccination; and
- strengthened its laboratory network through meetings, a public health microbiology survey, and the development of a database of microbiology reference laboratories in Europe.

Preparedness and response

With the inauguration of the new Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in March 2008, ECDC is now fully prepared to respond to all challenges in the area of preparedness and response. Main achievements in 2008:

- Since the end of 2007, ECDC has fully supported the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS).
- In 2008, a total of 251 threats were monitored; 31 threat assessments covering 24 different diseases

were produced. ECDC also monitored threats during two major international events: the 2008 UEFA European Football Championship (Euro 2008) in Austria and Switzerland, and the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

- 250 public health experts participated in short ECDC training courses, and 41 fellows took part in the two-year ECDC European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET).

Health communication

ECDC has significantly consolidated its infrastructure and today successfully disseminates scientific and technical information to specialised audiences. The general public are also kept informed on the Centre's activities. Major accomplishments for 2008:

- Launch of the first Europe-wide public information campaign on the rational use of antibiotics: European Antibiotic Awareness Day (18 November 2008).
- Upgraded web site launched for the scientific journal *Eurosurveillance*. ECDC's flagship publication has seen a steady increase in online readership; by the end of 2008 online subscriptions had reached 14,000.
- ECDC upgraded its corporate communication tools; most notably, a comprehensive, fully updated, and multilingual interim web site was prepared, ready for integration with the new ECDC web portal in 2009.



Poster of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day campaign in the EU area of Brussels, Belgium, in November 2008.



The Emergency Operation Centre of the ECDC, inaugurated in March 2008, operates a 24/7 on-duty system, involving 38 staff and ensuring round-the-clock screening of emerging health threats in the EU.

Enhancing ECDC capacities in disease programmes

In 2008, ECDC further strengthened the capacity of its seven disease-specific programmes (DSPs). As specified in ECDC's 'Strategic multi-annual programme 2007–2013', DSPs will become the main focus for the Centre in the coming years.

Each DSP initiated and conducted a large number of activities in 2008. Together with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, ECDC published a report on 'HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe' on World AIDS Day (1 December 2008). 'Tuberculosis surveillance in Europe', another ECDC/WHO joint project report, was released on World TB Day (24 March 2009).

2008 saw improvements to the DSPs' organisational structures. Further changes will be made in 2009, when specific strategies for each programme will be developed.

In 2008, the following disease-specific programmes were in place:

- influenza;
- tuberculosis;
- emerging and vectorborne diseases;
- food- and waterborne diseases and zoonoses;
- antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infections;
- vaccine-preventable diseases; and
- sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS and blood-borne viruses.



The fourth meeting of the Management Board in 2008 was held in Paris, France, in November, at the invitation of the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS).

Further development of partnerships

For an organisation like ECDC, which operates at the European level, partnerships are essential. In 2008, the Centre's close cooperation with Member States continued in a number of areas. Productive and effective working relations with different partner organisations were further strengthened. Main achievements in this area included:

- 22 country visits;
- increased involvement of the Competent Bodies in the Centre's activities;
- the provision of support to the European Commission and EU Presidencies;
- sustained working collaborations with other EU agencies (including EFSA, EMEA, and the Joint Research Centre of the EU);
- the strengthening of ECDC's collaboration with WHO; and
- the initiation of close working relations with the three candidate countries for EU accession.



The ECDC Management Board in September 2008, when it had an extraordinary meeting to discuss the results of the first external evaluation of the Centre.

Milestones in 2008

Two milestones demonstrate the consolidation and continuous expansion of ECDC activities in 2008:

- The adoption of a set of strategy indicators by the Management Board that allow the monitoring of the implementation of ECDC's 'Strategic multi-annual programme 2007–2013'. These strategy indicators were already successfully used during a pilot phase in 2008.
- The positive results of an independent external evaluation of the Centre's activities, completed in 2008. The evaluation concluded that 'ECDC is an independent centre of scientific excellence that made a significant contribution to the fight against communicable diseases'.

During an extraordinary meeting held in September 2008 to discuss the results of this external evaluation, ECDC's Management Board left open the possibility of the Centre taking on new areas of responsibility from 2013 onwards, provided that long-term funding is available.



Staff in May 2008.

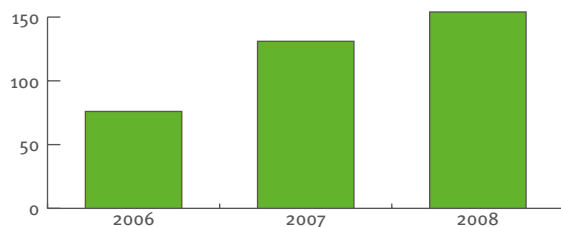
Increased resources

The Centre's capacities were strengthened both in terms of human resources and budget allocation, enabling ECDC to embark on additional activities.

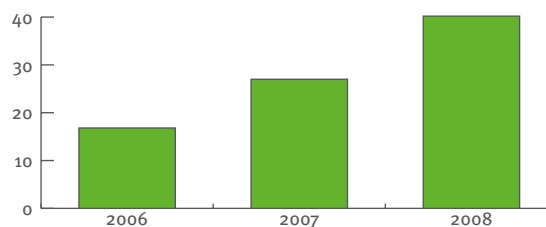
The number of ECDC staff has increased steadily: In 2008, ECDC hired 54 additional staff members. By the end of the year, the total number of staff (temporary and contract agents) reached 154. The Centre's budget

increased from EUR 27 million in 2007 to EUR 40.2 million in 2008. Due to ECDC's rapid growth, operational units were split into sections in order to ensure the efficient management of people and resources.

Number of staff (temporary and contract agents)



Budget summary (amounts in millions of euros)

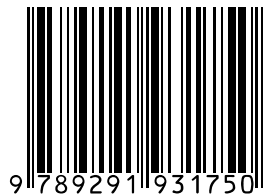


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