



ECDC Management Board

# Minutes of the Forty-eighth Meeting 26 March 2020 (via audio conference)

*Adopted by the ECDC Management Board at its Forty-ninth meeting, 17 June 2020*

## Contents

Opening and welcome from the Chair (and noting the Representatives) .....	4
Welcome from the Director, ECDC.....	4
Adoption of the draft programme (and noting the declarations of interest and proxy voting, if any) ( <i>Document MB48/01</i> ).....	4
Adoption of the draft minutes of the 47 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Management Board (Stockholm, 13-14 November 2019) ( <i>Document MB48/02</i> ).....	4
Annual Report of the Director on the Centre's Activities in 2019 (including Draft Analysis and Assessment of Annual Report of the Director 2019) ( <i>Document MB48/03, MB48/03 Corrigendum</i> ).....	4
Provisional Annual Accounts 2019, including report on Budgetary and Financial Management ( <i>Document MB48/04</i> ).....	5
COVID-19: Update from ECDC and Q&A .....	6
Report on Implementation of the Work Programme 2020 ( <i>Document MB48/05</i> ) .....	7
Any other business.....	8
Annex: List of Participants .....	9

## Summary of Proceedings – ECDC Management Board Meeting

The Forty-eighth meeting of the ECDC Management Board convened on 26 March 2020 via audio conference. During the meeting, the Management Board:

- ❖ adopted the programme of the meeting;
- ❖ adopted the minutes of the Forty-seventh meeting of the Management Board;
- ❖ approved the Annual Report of the Director on the Centre's Activities in 2019 (including Draft Analysis and Assessment of Annual Report of the Director 2019);
- ❖ approved the Provisional Annual Accounts 2019, including Report on Budgetary and Financial Management;
- ❖ received an update from ECDC on the work related to the COVID-19 outbreak, and discussed the matter further in a tour-de-table session;
- ❖ discussed the Report on Implementation of the Work Programme 2020 up until present, including proposed changes in the Financing Decision, and agreed that the document would be sent to the Management Board for approval via written procedure due to lack of quorum.

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

1. Anni Virolainen-Julkunen, Chair of the ECDC Management Board, welcomed all the participants to the Forty-eighth meeting of the Management Board, which convened via audio conference due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A special welcome was extended to the following newly appointed MB members: Geneviève Chêne, France, Panagiotis Arkoumanas, Greece, Colette Bonner, Ireland, and Pilar Aparicio Azcárraga, Spain.
2. Apologies had been received from the Netherlands and Portugal (proxy to Sweden). In addition, the following countries did not attend the meeting: Austria, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Romania, and Slovakia.

## Welcome from the Director, ECDC

3. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, warmly welcomed the Management Board members and thanked them for taking the time to participate in the meeting despite the exceptional circumstances that all Member States were facing under the current outbreak.

## Adoption of the draft programme (and noting the declarations of interest and proxy voting, if any) (*Document MB48/01*)

4. The Chair mentioned that the draft programme included three topics for decision as well as an update from ECDC on the work on COVID-19 followed by discussion. The Management Board adopted the draft programme without changes. Following the adoption of the programme, 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 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Management Board (Stockholm, 13-14 November 2019) (*Document MB48/02*)

5. The Management Board adopted the draft minutes without amendments.

The Management Board adopted the minutes of the Forty-seventh meeting of the Management Board.

## Annual Report of the Director on the Centre's Activities in 2019 (including Draft Analysis and Assessment of Annual Report of the Director 2019) (*Document MB48/03, MB48/03 Corrigendum*)

6. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, presented the Annual Activity Report 2019. She mentioned that 90% of ECDC's planned activities had been implemented (target 85%). The budget of the Centre was 59.2 M€, which meant an increase of 1.2 M€ compared to 2018. The number of staff amounted to 280, of which 77% are categorised as operational staff. In 2019, the Management Board approved the report of the third external evaluation of the Centre, which reflects an overall positive perception of the Centre by its stakeholders. During the year, progress was made on the preparation of the ECDC Strategy 2021-2027 and the revision of the internal organisation, with the new ECDC structure put in place as of 1 January 2020. ECDC also continued to support the Commission and Member States within the scope of its missions, including support to Decision 1082/2013/EC. The Centre reinforced its collaboration with external partners, particularly with WHO. As a major milestone, she mentioned that in 2019 ECDC managed to publish 75% of its surveillance data within 3 months after their collection (compared to 5% the previous year). While

giving priority to the areas of antimicrobial resistance, vaccine preventable diseases and contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ECDC addressed a wide range of communicable diseases with data, analysis, scientific guidance, and a range of practical tools. Lastly, she recalled that the Annual Report follows the common template for EU agencies. It includes a systematic review of the SPD 2018 implementation and the result of the indicators set in the SPD.

7. In the discussion that followed, several MB members complemented ECDC for the positive results achieved despite going through a reorganisation and an external evaluation as well as chairing the EU agencies' network. One of the members representing the European Parliament noted that the availability and timeliness of data was of utmost importance for the EU as a whole, and congratulated ECDC on the progress made in this area. With reference to the third external evaluation of ECDC, she asked how it was foreseen to proceed with the adoption of the recommendations of the external evaluation given that this item had been removed from the agenda. The MB member from Norway informed the Management Board that this was his last MB meeting, and thanked ECDC and all the MB members for the fruitful collaboration.

8. The Chair thanked the MB Member from Norway for his valuable contribution to the work of the Management Board.

9. Andrea Ammon clarified that there had been a request to discuss one pending issue related to the recommendations of the external evaluation in a face-to-face meeting, and this discussion would now need to take place in June. In the meantime, she suggested that ECDC could look at the draft recommendations to identify elements to be taken on board in the planning. She thanked for the positive feedback expressed by the Management Board, and added that she would convey the compliments to the ECDC staff.

The Management Board approved the Annual Report of the Director on the Centre's Activities in 2019 (including Draft Analysis and Assessment of Annual Report of the Director 2019).

### **Provisional Annual Accounts 2019, including report on Budgetary and Financial Management (*Document MB48/04*)**

10. Anja Van Brabant Head of Section, Finance and Accounting, Resource Management Services, ECDC, presented the Provisional Annual Accounts 2019. She recalled that the Accounts consist of two parts: the financial statements of the Centre and the report on the implementation of the budget of the Centre. The Provisional Accounts were audited by an external audit firm (E&Y) during 2-6 March 2020. The audit firm concluded that the provisional accounts 2019 were entirely correct, and informed the ECDC Director that no changes needed to be made for the final version of the accounts to be delivered by 1 July 2020 together with the opinion of the Management Board. In addition, the Court of Auditors had no findings of the two audits they performed related to 2019. The Final Annual Accounts 2019 will be presented to the Board for approval in June 2020.

11. The Management Board thanked ECDC for the transparency and clarity of the report. One of the MB Members representing the European Parliament noted that the cost of governance meetings was given as a total cost, and asked whether it was possible to have the figures separately for the Management Board and the Advisory Forum.

12. Anja Van Brabant replied that this information could be shared with the Management Board following the meeting. She clarified that it was no longer possible to make changes in the 2019 accounts, but the separation of costs could be taken on board for next year's accounts.

The Management Board approved the Provisional Annual Accounts 2019, including report on Budgetary and Financial Management.

## COVID-19: Update from ECDC and Q&A

13. Andrea Ammon, Director, ECDC, updated the Management Board on ECDC's work related to the COVID-19 outbreak focusing on the activities carried out in the last three months. Since the start of the outbreak, ECDC has published seven Rapid Risk Assessments and numerous guidance documents targeting different audiences including health care personnel as well as the general public. ECDC has also produced an updated case definition for EU surveillance, and carried out surveys on expert laboratory readiness and response for novel coronavirus in 30 EU/EEA countries as well as existing shortages. Videos, infographics, posters, and leaflets have been produced, for instance on social distancing.

14. To date, ECDC has received more than 150 requests from the Member States and more than 50 from DG SANTE and other Commission Services. Country visits have been carried out in Italy and Greece. Since the activation of a Public Health Event (PHE – level 2) in January 2020, a core team of around 40 technical experts and 15-20 support staff are working full-time on COVID-19. Other technical experts are providing ad hoc support; to date the work has involved almost every technical expert in ECDC at some point and in some capacity. A new PHE structure was recently put in place to ensure better coordination and continuity in the PHE structure. A PHE COVID-19 Support Group was established to reduce the pressure on the PHE core response team.

15. Concerning communication, the Director noted that ECDC is working with media teams in 28 countries. Over 250 media requests have been received since the PHE activation. The media responses include TV and radio interviews, written responses and responding to technical questions. In three months, the ECDC web site has registered as many visits as in the past six years. Increased activity can also be observed on ECDC's social media accounts.

16. As for the forward look, ECDC activities include modelling in order to assess the effect of mitigation measures and to produce scenarios for the de-escalation of measures, revising the surveillance guidance based on scenario evolution, and coordinating and liaising with research projects (clinical descriptions and studies, sero-epidemiology, hospital surveillance), and providing laboratory support as much as possible. ECDC will also support the Commission and Member States with rapid scientific assessments. ECDC is working very closely with WHO as well as with other CDCs. Lastly, with reference to the last Rapid Risk Assessment (RRA), which had now become rather voluminous, she asked the MB members whether it was preferable to have all information in the same document, as currently, or in separate documents according to the topic.

17. The Chair opened the floor for discussion. The MB members expressed great appreciation of ECDC's work in general, and praised ECDC especially for responding to questions and requests in a very timely manner. The MB members from Italy and Greece thanked ECDC experts for their professionalism during the recent country visits. Responding to the question on what ECDC activities supported the Member States most in the current outbreak, several members mentioned the daily updates of epidemiological data, the RRAs, and various guidance documents, and the fact that ECDC guidance has become standard reference or basis for discussion on national guidelines and recommendations. Most members mentioned that it was preferable to have the information concentrated in one document (RRA), rather than in several separate documents.

18. Responding to the question about what ECDC should focus on in the future beyond the current activities, the most needed work in the opinion of several members was: (1) on rapid diagnostic tests; (2) on serological studies; and (3) on the effectiveness of mitigation measures and guidance on strategy and indicators for de-escalation of measures. The importance of a coordinated approach within EU was stressed in this context. One MB member called for further comparison of mortality between COVID-19 and seasonal influenza and other respiratory infections. Another member asked how ECDC sees the adaptation of the surveillance system to the changing situation, and how Member States can contribute to the standardisation of the surveillance system for COVID-19. The challenges experienced by hospitals were also raised, and it was mentioned that the rule of 14 days of quarantine of healthcare workers causes problems, with implications for the workforce. It was further suggested that some sort of infographic on PPE targeting healthcare workers would be helpful. Other points raised included information on hospitalisations/100 000 population, how eHealth and Artificial Intelligence could be used in the work on COVID-19, EWRS cross-

border tracing of cases, and the definition of areas of intensive transmission in the Member States. The lack of visibility of ECDC and its outputs was also discussed; several members noted that media is mainly referring to WHO. One MB member representing the European Parliament asked what ECDC was doing to leverage Artificial Intelligence to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. One MB member asked for further information regarding the expert panel advising the President of the European Commission, and the input of ECDC in the work of this group.

19. One of the MB members representing the European Commission clarified that the ECDC Director is participating as observer in the expert scientific panel advising the President of the Commission on matters related to COVID-19. ECDC has already contributed significantly to the work of the expert panel, as well as EMA. He stressed that the response to the pandemic goes beyond the mandate of ECDC, and the expert panel is providing advice on different topics such as risk management and clinical aspects, but also on economic and social aspects. He ensured that the panel was not in any way duplicating the work of ECDC but complementing it.

20. Referring to the comment on the use of Artificial Intelligence, François Mestre, Head of Unit Digital Transformation Services, ECDC, mentioned that some Member States are currently launching Chatbots to attend the public questions on COVID-19, and that other Member States as well as ECDC could investigate this option as well. He also described ongoing technology and eHealth initiatives. WHO is developing an app called MyHealth with different features such as symptom checker, etc. This app will first be available in English, French and Spanish, but possibilities to translate it into further languages are being looked at. Other initiatives supported by WHO include hackathons where developers can submit project proposals to address a broad array of challenges around the pandemic, where ECDC is contributing with an open dataset on COVID-19.

21. Andrea Ammon thanked the MB members for their appreciation of ECDC's work, and added that this was important for the ECDC colleagues who had been working very hard over the last few months. Responding to the feedback on topics to focus on in the near future, she noted that rapid tests and serological tests were already under discussion, but sufficient information on their reliability is not yet available. As already mentioned, ECDC is also working on modelling to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and to develop guidance on how to de-escalate such measures.

The Management Board discussed matters related to the COVID-19 outbreak in a tour-de-table session.

## **Report on Implementation of the Work Programme 2020 (Document MB48/05)**

22. Philippe Harant, Planning and Monitoring Manager, Executive Office, Director's Office, ECDC, provided an update on the status of the implementation of the Work Programme 2020. He explained that, as of 25 March 2020, 1% of the SPD 2020 activities had been implemented, 54% had started and were on schedule, 22% were delayed due to COVID-19, 2% at risk, 3% not started, 12% were proposed to be postponed to 2021 and 4% proposed to be cancelled.

23. He explained that approximately 60 staff members are directly involved in the PHE roster in the support to the Commission and the Member States to address the novel coronavirus situation. A number of activities have had to be deprioritised due to the non-availability of the staff initially assigned for their implementation. The expected impact on the implementation of the work programme for 2020 is summarised in the document circulated to the Board; the list will be revised regularly depending on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the moment the total financial impact of the deprioritisation is the release of 2,814,731 EUR in Title 3 (operations), for which the reallocation is still to be decided (cost of foreseen outsourcing/procurements and meetings).

24. Lastly, he presented the changes in the Financing Decision as outlined in Annex 1 of the document. He clarified that the Financing Decision does not yet reflect the expected release of the budget mentioned above, as the reassignment of the funds has not yet been decided, but it includes a reduction of 300,000 EUR for the Foresight, and the allocation of 250,000 EUR for modelling activities for COVID-19.

25. Following the presentation, one MB member inquired about the impact of COVID-19 on other surveillance activities in 2020 and 2021. She stressed that Member States are now fully mobilised on COVID-19, and it was already clear that there will be limited capacities to provide data on other diseases under EU surveillance. For this reason, she requested that ECDC initiates as soon as possible a prioritisation exercise of the surveillance activities for 2020 and 2021. She also noted that it would be important to consider how the released funds could be used in order to add the most value to countries with the biggest needs in relation to COVID-19. She suggested sending more detailed comments in writing.

26. Andrea Ammon responded that ECDC was aware of the challenges in Member States related to surveillance and reporting, and agreed that prioritisation will be necessary. ECDC will also look into how the released funds (2.8 Million EUR) can best be used without creating an extra burden on the Member States.

27. Due to lack of quorum for this last item on the agenda (some MB members had to leave the audio conference before the end of the meeting), the Chair suggested that ECDC would circulate the document to the Management Board for approval via written procedure.

The Management Board took note of the Report on Implementation of the Work Programme 2020 up until present, including the proposed changes in the Financing Decision. Due to lack of quorum, the document will be circulated to the Management Board for approval via written procedure.

### **Any other business**

28. The Chair thanked all the Board Members for their participation and valuable contributions. The next Management Board meeting is scheduled to convene in Stockholm during 16-17 June 2020.



## Annex: List of Participants

Belgium	Lieven De Raedt	Member
Bulgaria	Angel Kunchev	Member
Czech Republic	Jozef Dlhý	Alternate
Cyprus	Irene Cotter	Member
Denmark	Marlene Øhrberg Krag	Member
Estonia	Heli Laarmann	Member
Finland	Anni Virolainen-Julkunen (Chair)	Member
	Taneli Puumalainen	Alternate
France	Geneviève Chêne	Member
France	Anne-Catherine Viso	Alternate
Germany	Gesa Lücking	Alternate
Greece	Panagiotis Arkoumanas	Member
Hungary	Ágnes Dánielisz	Member
Ireland	Colette Bonner	Member
Italy	Francesco Maraglino	Alternate
Latvia	Dzintars Mozgis	Alternate
Lithuania	Audrius Ščeponavičius	Member
Malta	Patricia Vella Bonanno	Member

Poland	Dariusz Poznański	Member
Slovenia	Mojca Gobec	Member
Spain	Pilar Aparicio Azcárraga	Member
Sweden	Johan Carlson	Member
<b>European Parliament</b>		
	Zofija Mazej Kukovič	Member
	Maria Eleni Koppa	Member
<b>European Commission</b>		
DG Santé	Martin Seychell	Member
DG Santé	John F. Ryan	Member
DG RTD	Barbara Kerstiens	Member
<b>EEA Countries</b>		
Norway	Karl-Olaf Wathne	Member