



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Call for Expression of Interest - remunerated external experts

Profile – public health areas for country support

(Ref. No. CEI/ECDC/2021/004)

1. Background

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU Agency aimed at strengthening Europe's defense against infectious diseases. It works in three key strategic areas: it provides evidence for effective and efficient decision-making, it strengthens public health systems, and it supports the response to public health threats. Apart from support to EU/EEA countries, ECDC is providing technical assistance to EU candidate and potential candidate (EU Enlargement) countries and European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) partner countries.

The commitment to enhance and use the existing knowledge about countries is explicitly expressed in the ECDC corporate strategy:

- Goal 2: By 2027 ECDC has improved its knowledge of countries, thus, by enhancing disease specific work, surveillance, training, and emergency preparedness, is able to equip/empower partners to drive public health policy and practice.
- Strategic Objective 2: Support the countries to strengthen their capacities & capabilities to make evidence-based decisions on public health policies and practices.
Action area 2.1. Country focus: Use country information to better target ECDC activities and improve country support.

Furthermore, the commitment of ECDC to strengthen the collaboration with non-EU countries is captured in the below:

- Goal 4: By 2027, ECDC contributes to increased health security in the EU through international collaboration and alignment regarding infectious disease policies and practice
- Strategic objective 4. Increase health security in the EU through strengthened cooperation and coordination between ECDC and partners in non-EU countries
- Action area 4.1. Neighbourhood: Develop and implement, together with partners, a comprehensive programme to support Western Balkans and Turkey and ENP partner countries to strengthen their infectious disease prevention and control systems and public health workforce.

Complementarily, ECDC is analysing together with the EU Member States the most suitable practical approaches to provide support while avoiding overburdening the countries. The approach developed for the EU/EEA countries will be applied with necessary adaptations to the non-EU partner countries.

1.1. Description of the Targeted country support work in ECDC

Targeted country support (TCS) is one of the ECDC's priorities. It aims at providing tailored support activities to most-in-need countries and includes a two-phase approach: preparation and implementation.

TCS focuses on work with the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area (hereafter referred to as EU/EEA Member States) on medium and long-term priorities, medium and big-size initiatives. The primary ECDC external stakeholders in TCS work are the ECDC Coordinating Competent Bodies (CCBs) through the National Coordinators. Within ECDC, the TCS work is cross- functional and is coordinated by the European and International Cooperation section in Director's office, supported by a core team, referred to as TCS team, with staff from different Units.

The preparation phase started in 2020, the work is focused mostly internally, and it is aimed at setting up processes and policies for ECDC to strengthen its efficiency and effectiveness in addressing countries' needs on the topics of highest relevance. Part of this work relevant for the present call for experts are the activities related to country missions and to country overviews, described below.

1.1.1 Country missions

Country missions are a means for ECDC to "get closer to countries". Country missions entail collecting data and information to assess countries' needs, as well as providing assistance and *ad-hoc* support or monitoring/ reviewing ongoing activities. They also serve as an opportunity for bilateral exchange of views, experiences, and practices. Based on work done already, an ECDC internal procedure was approved that includes a description of the principles, purpose, types of country missions (see Annex 1 for more details) and defines a standard process to conduct them.

An annual list of country missions will be compiled; this will include details about the countries, topics, types of visits, and timelines. To facilitate the practical implementation of this list and avoid overlapping, a multi-annual country mission programme may be set up as a baseline activity of ECDC. The programme would aim at achieving specific outcomes and benefits for the countries according both to their needs and to EU priorities. Setting up a country mission programme is being discussed with the CCB representatives and other ECDC external key stakeholders.

This call is looking for external experts who could serve as contributors to ECDC country missions, (including to serve as "peer reviewers").

1.1.2 Country overviews

ECDC currently collects quantitative and qualitative information from the EU/EEA Member States (and beyond), and these are mostly visualised by topic. The intention is to facilitate visualisation by country: country overviews. This will support ECDC staff to have a more comprehensive view at the country level to better identify relevant support activities, thus being for internal use (at least during the initial phase). Should the ECDC external stakeholders be interested and agree, these could become accessible to nominated users in EU/EEA and non-EU partner countries.

Work has been done to define the objectives, and the high-level content of the country overviews.

The objectives for the country overviews to be used internally are to:

- Allow ECDC experts to have a holistic view on the situation in a country, including contextual factors;
- Provide ECDC experts with a view on ECDC's past engagements with a country;
- Contribute to the identification of vulnerabilities (V), needs (N) and strengths (S) at a country level;
- Facilitate cross-functional cooperation across ECDC.

The content of the country overviews will be structured in seven areas:

- Country information and health governance
- Human resource capacity
- Surveillance systems
- National system for microbiology laboratories
- Preparedness for and response to public health emergencies
- Disease programmes
- Digital public health

Prevention will be also included in these knowledge overviews. The content will be displayed according to a three-layered approach, as per figure below.

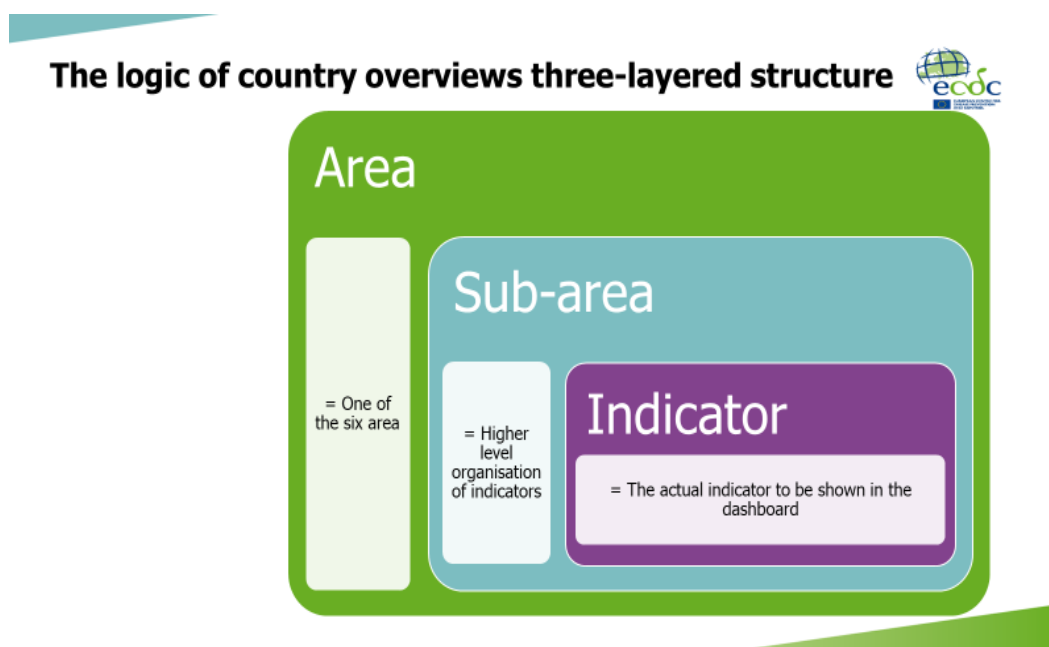


Figure 1: Three-layered structure for the country overviews

The sources for all the content of the country overviews are:

- Internal: data (numeric and text) that ECDC is currently already collecting from the EU/EEA as well as non-EU partner countries through systematic data collection, surveys, as well as unstructured data, e.g. from country missions, network interactions etc;
- External: public sources, e.g. Eurostat, WHO, etc.

This call is looking for external experts who could contribute to ECDC country overviews structure and detailed content around indicators e.g.: list, definition, sources, data validation, as well as on setting up an analysis methodology.

1.2. Description of the experts' tasks and deliverables

Under the areas of work mentioned above, the below specific tasks and deliverables are anticipated:

1.2.1. Country missions:

Contribute to country missions during all the steps including preparation, execution, closure and follow-up. As such, the experts could prepare/ draft, contribute to the key documents to be developed, including but not limited to:

- Terms of reference for the country visit;
- Visit programme;
- Preparation of and/or participation in a virtual and/or face-to-face country visit;
- Country mission report.

1.2.2. Country overviews:

- a. Analyse the current list of indicators developed by ECDC for the various areas of the country overviews and analyse to streamline it;
- b. Contribute to the refinement and improvement of indicators (additional indicators needed, sources of data, definitions, objective and aim of the indicators, etc.);
- c. Contribute in setting up an analysis methodology of the country overviews in order to identify in a transparent, consistent and objective manner vulnerabilities (V), needs (N) and strengths (S) at country level and permit grouping based on various criteria, e.g. topics, geography etc.;
- d. Contribute to the analysis of VNS at country level.

In order to support delivery of the tasks mentioned in the sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. above, ECDC invites experts to express their interest to provide their expertise in the following areas:

- Microbiology and molecular surveillance;
- Surveillance systems;
- Disease programmes or diseases that include: Vaccine-preventable diseases and Immunisation (VPI); Coronavirus and Influenza (CAI); STI, Blood-Borne Viruses and TB (SBT); AMR and Healthcare-Associated Infections (ARHAI), Emerging, Food- and Vector-borne Diseases (EFVED);
- Emergency preparedness and response support;
- Epidemic intelligence;
- Programmatic expertise in communicable disease preventive programmes/ monitoring and evaluation of prevention programmes in the area of communicable diseases;
- Public health and health systems;
- Digital public health;
- Civil society or patient involvement.

Communication between ECDC and experts will be in English.

2. Selection criteria for the profile

In order to be eligible, the following selection criteria must be fulfilled:

- a. University degree in medicine, public health, epidemiology, microbiology, social sciences, veterinary or a related area, e.g. health systems management, health informatics, digital health etc.;
- b. A minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in performing work in an international environment, in the area of infectious disease prevention and control and related public health and health service management, (e.g.: surveillance systems, public health emergency preparedness and response, epidemiology, disease programmes, microbiology and molecular surveillance, public health and health systems management, digital health, etc);
- c. Excellent knowledge of health system organisation and planning through a minimum of 3 years' experience performing work in this area;
- d. For the disease programmes and especially TB, STI/HIV, hepatitis area: experience of working at least 3 years with or for civil society and patient involvement;
- e. For preparedness, public health systems: good knowledge on EU and international public health legislation such as the EU health security framework and International Health Regulations demonstrated through work experience;
- f. Good writing and analytical skills, as demonstrated by at least one example of analytical work in relation to analysis of the above-mentioned areas of work, including a list of minimum five publications/ presentations to international conferences relevant for the profile;
- g. Minimum C1 in the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages¹ level of English.
- h. Good knowledge of MS Office.

The selection criteria will be verified against the CV in the Expert Directory. Candidates who do not meet the selection criteria will not be considered for assignments.

3. Place of delivery

The assignment can be delivered in the country of residence of selected experts, ECDC or, if pre-authorised by ECDC, in the beneficiary country. Should country missions to beneficiary countries be organised, the related costs will be reimbursed separately in accordance with the contract. Regular virtual meetings with ECDC may be organised during the assignment as per contractual agreement

4. Time limit to express interest for this profile and validity of the list

The list resulting from this notice is valid until 09/07/2026. Interested parties may submit an expression of interest at any time prior to the last 3 months of validity of the list, meaning no later than 09/04/2026.

5. Exclusion criteria

Before being offered a contract, any selected candidate must provide a declaration on honour (see link at [Declaration on honour](#)), signed and dated by an authorised representative, stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion listed in that declaration on honour.

6. How to express interest

Experts may express their interest to this profile by uploading their CV to the ECDC expert directory at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/ceiECDCexperts> and inserting the reference

¹ See Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (<http://www.coe.int/lang-cefr>)

number of this call for expression of interest from a drop-down list under the tab "Reference" in the Expert Directory.

Annex 1 Details around country missions

ECDC country missions can have various purposes, which are jointly agreed with the countries according to their needs.

a) Assessment

The aim is to learn about the country situation in communicable diseases, the public health system or its specific parts, existing strengths, opportunities, vulnerabilities and needs and to design an action plan/ joint activities/ support as follow-up to the visit.

b) Assistance/ support (including outbreak response)

These missions can be planned or organised in a very short timeframe (*ad-hoc*) when an outbreak occurs and requires urgent response. The aim is that ECDC provide support to address the problem during the visit or to develop a list of follow-up actions.

c) Review

The aim is to determine how the country is dealing with certain official requirements or international guidelines, standards, strategies (that ECDC has committed to), e.g. Council Recommendation of 15 November 2001 on the prudent use of antimicrobial agents in human medicine (2002/77/EC); Decision 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health; Administrative Decision on 'Rules governing the EU-track of the ECDC Fellowship Programme, field epidemiology path (EPIET) and public health microbiology path (EUPHEM)' and procedures specified in the Manual for the ECDC Fellowship Programme EPIET and EUPHEM paths.

d) Advocacy and promotion

The aim is to promote the ECDC expertise and approach and advocate for actions, ensuring high visibility to a certain topic considered of key importance and advocate for it to the policy and decision makers. These are a special type of assessment missions, due to the possible high media involvement during the visit. While high media involvement and advocacy are mainly linked to a Director's visit, there may be opportunities when technical missions could meet this purpose.

e) Monitor/ evaluate progress, as part of a specific project

These visits are aimed at monitoring and/or evaluating ongoing joint activities in a country and suggest adjustments for the future.

Principles to be followed when ECDC performs country missions:**a) Country-driven**

All country missions consider the requests of the countries and are tailored to meet their specific situations and needs. Exception from this is done for the visits conducted within the fellowship programme (EPIET and EUPHEM), driven by ECDC, to follow-up on previous agreements and procedures in these areas with the countries. For country missions to non-EU/EEA countries, it might be that a visit is requested by a third party, such as the European Commission, or is planned under an ECDC Action funded by the European Commission.

b) Proactive vs. Reactive approach

While countries can submit invitations for a visit at any time, ECDC will also become more proactive in informing and engaging in dialogue with countries about possible types of missions and their added value. Decision makers at national level can thus become aware and decide which country visits would best suit their needs.

c) One single entry and contact for ECDC country missions

There will be one single point for sharing information about ECDC country missions externally, i.e. a landing page on the ECDC website.

There will be one single contact point per type of country missions, i.e. a functional e-mail address:

country.support@ecdc.europa.eu for EU/EEA countries and international.relations@ecdc.europa.eu for non-EU/EEA countries, which will be used for the formal correspondence, e.g.: invitation of the country, final official country mission report.

d) Maximising contribution of country missions to ECDC corporate priorities while avoiding overburdening countries

Priority will be given, within the Single Programming Document (SPD) and annual work plan, to country missions that are related to ECDC's annual priorities, thus ensuring that country missions contribute to corporate objectives. Other topics can be included, should resources be available. ECDC will seek the possibility of conducting multi-disciplinary country missions, should several visits be planned to the same country, to avoid overburdening that country.

e) Balance between minimal standards and flexibility (based on good practices) in the country missions process

Each country mission will be recorded in the country mission module in SRM and will follow the same process. Minimal standards (e.g. pre-defined documents templates, unique ID in the annual work plan) will be used, while full flexibility will be ensured for the organisation and execution phases.

f) Expand the use of digital tools

Digital tools and specifically virtual meetings can aid the process to become more resource efficient and environmentally sustainable, facilitate the preparation and follow-up, and ensure that onsite interactions are more focused.

g) Funding for follow-up

Funding (to be decided annually by the ECDC Director) will be earmarked to ensure that follow-up activities of small scale (e.g. workshops, consultancy) can be organised after country missions, part of an existing framework contract, as applicable.

h) Possibility to identify new activities in the ECDC workplan for follow-up to country visits

Should the follow-up of country missions necessitate a larger amount of funding for follow-up, new activities could be inserted in the ECDC workplan.