



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR
DISEASE PREVENTION
AND CONTROL

ECDC Management Board

MB5/Minutes
20 March 2006

**Minutes of the fifth meeting of the ECDC Management Board
Stockholm, 13-14 December 2005**

(Adopted by the 6th meeting of the Management Board on 20 March 2006)

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Summary of Decisions

The Management Board

- approved the minutes of its 4th meeting;
- approved the proposed budget for ECDC for 2006, subject to final approval of the level of the budget by the Budgetary Authorities;
- recommended positively on the draft budget and establishment plan for 2007 on the understanding that it would be further reviewed by the Commission before being despatched to the European Parliament and the Council for approval/amendment;
- endorsed the concept and procedures for scientific advice and support as presented in document MB5/7/6 and requested that the final version including the legal text should be reviewed by the Commission's Legal Services and subsequently distributed to the Members for final approval through written procedure;
- approved the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Forum subject to a few suggested amendments to be incorporated;
- took note of the conclusions of the 1st meeting of the Audit Committee;
- approved the broadened mandate of the Audit Committee as contained in document MB5/12/15;
- endorsed the steps planned by the Centre to implement the interim strategy on surveillance;
- endorsed the training strategy in intervention epidemiology in Europe as contained in document MB5/13/17.;
- agreed, as an interim measure until further discussion, to the proposal to double the per diem for the members of the European Parliament on the Board to cover their expenses;
- Approved the proposed dates for future meetings of the Board in 2006 subject to verification that they do not overlap with dates of other important EU meetings.

The Management Board also:

- welcomed the Director's report on progress made since the last meeting of the Management Board and congratulated the Director and her staff on all the achievements in 2005;
- welcomed the first draft outline of the general report on the Centre's activities;
- reconfirmed the initial programme of work 2005-2006 and took note of the Centre's work plans for 2006
- noted the outcome of the second meeting of the Audit Committee;
- took note the kind invitations of Greece and Poland to host a meeting of the Management Boar in 2006 and 2007 respectively.

Opening and welcome by the chair

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. A special welcome was extended to participants attending for the first time, notably Dr Hubert Hrabcik (Member representing Austria); Ms Maria Grazia Pompa (Alternate to Mr Donato Greco, Italy); Dr Merja Saarinen (Alternate to Dr Tapani Melkas, Finland). In addition, two new appointments were welcomed, namely Dr Colette Bonner (appointed alternate to Dr Eibhlin Connolly, Ireland) and Dr Anne Pinteaux (appointed alternate to Dr Gilles Brücker, France).

Adoption of the agenda *(document MB52/1 Rev.2)*

2. The agenda was adopted without change.

Declaration of interest

3. With regard to the question if any member wished to make a declaration of interest for any of the items on the agenda, the Chair declared the interest of the Netherlands in Agenda Item 11: “Implementation of the Surveillance Strategy”. No other declaration of interest was made.

Director’s briefing on progress made and outcome of the 4th meeting of the Advisory Forum

4. The Director briefed the Board on the main activities in the Centre since the last meeting, as well as on the outcome of the 4th meeting of the Advisory Forum, 28-29 November 2005. Before going through the activities in detail, she reminded Members of the new annual declaration of interest form on the ECDC website, and the need to complete that form by all who had not already done so.

5. Key issues discussed at the Advisory Forum had included “guidelines for poultry workers”; follow-up action on surveillance in terms of case definition and evaluation; and procedures to mobilize outbreak assistance teams in case of public health crises. The Advisory Forum had also discussed certain priority disease-specific projects, e.g. Influenza, HIV/AIDS/STI, AMR and Vaccine Preventable Diseases. ECDC’s potential role in the new International Health Regulations had also been on the agenda.

6. An important event had been the first meeting of the ECDC – WHO/EURO Joint Coordinating Group, which had met at the Centre on 1 December with high-level participation from the WHO Regional Office in Copenhagen. The WHO Assistant-Director General for Communicable Diseases from Headquarters had also attended to further discuss the collaboration between the Centre and WHO/HQ..

7. A briefing session on certain key priorities and on progress made had been organized with Commissioner Kyprianou and colleagues from DG SANCO on 7 December. It was expected that the Commissioner would visit ECDC in conjunction with the planned conference on influenza, tentatively scheduled for May 2006.

8. The two day Common Ground Exercise had been a valuable experience for the Centre, and had pointed to the need for some procedural improvements and to areas where further functionalities needed to be developed.

9. An important meeting had been held on the evolving surveillance strategy with the Network Forum. That meeting had provided an opportunity to exchange views and differences of opinion. The need to strengthen mutual support and collaboration, and the importance of finding consensus in this crucial field was clear to all stakeholders.

10. The Director also highlighted several other issues covered at the Centre since the last meeting of the Management Board, e.g. an internal senior-level retreat to finalize the budget and work plans for 2006 and projections for 2007; work on delegation of authority and other management mechanisms; ECDC's staffing policy and internal control standards.

11. In the ensuing discussion, the Board noted the positive evaluation of the Common Ground exercise as well as the shortcomings which had been revealed in information systems.. It looked forward to the evaluation report on the exercise which was already under way. The question of a central web site for the sharing of information would be reviewed in that regard.

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Management Board, 27-28 October 2005

12. The minutes and list of decisions of the Board's 4th meeting had already been circulated to the members through written procedure on 16 November, and some comments had been incorporated. Since no further comments were raised, the Board **approved** the minutes.

Annual report of the Director: first draft outline (*document MB5/5/5*)

13. In accordance with Article 14 (5) (d) of Regulation 851/2004, the Board shall adopt by 30th March the general report on the Centre's activities for the previous year.

14. The Board was presented with a draft outline of the annual report for 2005 for its guidance and advice. By presenting the outline at this early stage, the Board's views could be incorporated into a subsequent version to be submitted to it for approval at its session in March 2006.

15. The Board welcomed the draft outline and its informative nature. Various views were expressed on the questions of content and format versus target audience. It was recalled that the annual report should in essence try to meet two objectives: one being accountability vis-à-vis the Management Board, Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, and the other the issue of accessibility and information to the "general public". Other factors which had to be considered were costs versus impact.

16. In conclusion, the Board's preference was to aim at a single reference document, reporting succinctly on ECDC's progress and strategic thrust. An extract of that reference document could then be produced for journalists and the media, outlining in more popular terms what ECDC does for the European public.

17. ECDC was requested to continue its work along those lines, i.e. to prepare both an extensive reference report, together with an executive summary, for the March 2006 Board meeting. The Board would then review the next steps required, including the question of translation. As far as ECDC's language regime and translation policy was concerned, both costs and time constraints would need to be carefully considered.

18. In order to support the Centre in this work, Members of the Board were encouraged to send written comments to the Director on the draft which had been presented to them.

Work plans and budget

Work plans for 2006 (*document MB5/6/13*)

19. The Management Board had approved the Centre's work plans for 2005 at its last meeting. The work plans for 2006 should be seen as a logical continuation to establish an improved activity-based process, where outputs and deliverables are framed within a longer-term strategic focus and medium-term expected results.

20. The work plans for 2006, submitted in accordance with the Regulation (Article 14(d) and Article 16.3), were consistent with the requirement of the Internal Control Standards of the Commission, which the Centre would be gradually adopting on the basis of the Audit Committee's recommendations. In line with those standards, the 2006 work plans should be regarded as ECDC's internal management plan, where "general objectives shall be transposed into specific objectives and expected results for each activity and communicated to its staff. Specific objectives shall be verifiable and include meaningful and practical measurement criteria"

21. The work plans for 2006 were more detailed than those for 2005, and spelled out both what to deliver over the year and how to get there. As such, they would also be used as a means to delegate authority to the unit heads.

22. The Board welcomed the transparency of the new work plans and the improvements made in describing deliverables. Concern was however expressed by several speakers as to the ambitious agenda laid out for 2006, and questioned whether there would be adequate human and financial resources to deliver the plans in their entirety. It was suggested that some prioritization might be necessary, including qualification of deliverables. The formulation of clear indicators to measure progress would also need further work.

23. On the issue of specific deliverables in the plans, clarification was sought on ECDC's role in influenza preparedness planning, as this was an area with numerous stakeholders. It was explained that a political decision had been taken at the highest EU level to try to move such a preparedness plan forward and that ECDC, as a consequence, had a role to play in the matter. In response to another specific question, it was explained that TB would be added to the Centre's agenda, as and when additional staff and financial resources became available to it.

24. In conclusion, the Board **re-confirmed** the validity of the Programme of Work for 2005-2006, and **took note** of the Centre's work plans for 2006.

Budget for 2006 (*document MB5/6/18*)

25. In December 2004, SANCO had presented a budget proposal to the Management Board for the funding of the Centre in 2006 for an amount of €15,7 million.

26. Subsequent developments in the Environment and Health Committee of the European Parliament, and later in the Budget Committee of the Parliament, approved an additional amount of €1,5 million for a Crisis Centre at ECDC. The proposed budget for the year 2006 therefore totals €17,2 million, out of which 15.7 million are defined as core funding for the Centre and 1.5 million as an earmarked resource for the setting up of a Crisis Operations Centre.

27. The Board **approved** the proposed budget for ECDC for 2006, subject to final approval by the Budgetary Authorities.

Draft establishment plan and budget for 2007 (*document MB5/6/14*)

28. In accordance with Article 22 of Regulation 851/2004, and as an extension of the Management Board's consideration of the Centre's work plans and budget for 2006, the Director submitted her perspectives for 2007 in terms of budget and staffing needs. The document included, in addition to a draft budget and establishment plan for 2007, a number of arguments supporting the Centre's request for a substantive increase from 2006.

29. An internal exercise, estimating resource requirements based on specific priorities in the Regulation which ECDC would need to assume in 2007, had pointed to an additional budget requirement over and above the level for 2006 of at least €15,3 million and 60 additional temporary agents. Those estimates had subsequently been scaled down to arrive at a tentative budget of €29 million and an establishment plan of 100 temporary agents for 2007.

30. Further to the Director's introduction, a question was raised regarding ECDC's plans to establish its own laboratory capacity. It was explained that current plans did not include this, and that the Centre would instead be drawing on the resources of a number of expert and reference laboratories, as set out in Article 5 (3) of Regulation 851/2004. From the Commission's side, the Board was however informed of plans which had recently been drawn up for two mobile laboratories for outbreak assistance missions. If those plans were approved, the laboratories would be put at the disposal of the ECDC.

31. In conclusion, the Board **endorsed** the draft budget and establishment plan for 2007, on the understanding that the matter would be further reviewed by the Commission before being dispatched to the European Parliament and the Council for approval/amendment, as the case might be.

Rules of procedure of scientific panels (*document MB5/7/6*)

32. Based on the comments made at its 4th meeting in Budapest, a revised version of the document was submitted to the Management Board. Several discussions had in the meantime also been held with the Commission to discuss the concept and the operation of ad hoc scientific panels. The document reflected the outcome of those discussions. It was further clarified that, before finalization, the Rules of Procedure would be reviewed by the Commission's Legal Service in order to incorporate the necessary formal, legal clauses.

33. The question was raised with regard to the interface with scientific panels in other EU agencies, such as EMEA and EFSA. The Board felt that such panels should not be seen as overlaps, but rather as complementary to ECDC's work. As such, the process for dealing with scientific questions could on occasions also include other agencies' panels, depending on the nature of the issue raised. It was suggested that the various steps in the intended process, as presented to the Board, could be summarized in an Annex to the document.

34. As far as ECDC's scientific panels were concerned, these should be ad hoc and open-ended, but also tailor-made according to pre-determined deliverables.

35. In conclusion, and subject to the legal text to be incorporated following consultation with the Commission's Legal Services, the Board **endorsed** the document for finalization. Final approval by the Board would be given in due course through written procedure.

Rules of procedure of the Advisory Forum (*document MB5/8/7*)

36. As requested by the Chair at the 4th meeting, a revised version of the Rules of Procedure had been circulated to the members. No further comments or proposals for change had been received by the Secretariat since then.

37. The Board sought clarification on some potential inconsistencies between a few of the Articles in the Rules, and suggested appropriate amendments. Subject to those amendments, the Board **approved** the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Forum.

External communications strategy - Part I (*document MB5/10/11*)

38. A number of comments had been made on the draft communication strategy presented to the Board at its 4th meeting, particularly (a) on the process to be applied in giving prior information to Member States and the Commission on major media announcements by the Centre and (b) on ECDC's plans to develop its website and publications programme.

39. The paper presented to the Board addressed the first issue. The Centre will report back on the second issue during one of the Board's meetings in 2006, once an internal task force set up for that purpose had concluded its work.

40. The Board took note of the proposed procedures for making major announcements to the media, but expressed concern that the aspect of prior information to Member States and the Commission, called for in Article 12 of Regulation 851/2004, did not appear to be adequately covered in the proposal. It was pointed out that a dichotomy often existed between scientific knowledge and facts, and public information on what measures to take in the case of a major public health event. For the latter, consensus was essential.

41. The matter was further complicated by the need for speed in the case of crisis communications, which was also essential if any impact vis-à-vis the public was hoped for.

42. One way to proceed would be to develop clear algorithms for the decision making process, and for the Board to review these at a future meeting.

43. It was agreed that the matter was of such importance that more time would be required, and that a revised document should as a consequence be presented to the Board at its next meeting in March 2006. There were two important issues to keep in mind in re-drafting the paper: how to get the coordination and communication right vis-à-vis the Commission, and how to get it right vis-à-vis the Member States – both as regards content and timing.

44. A draft of the revised paper should be sent out to Members of the Board in good time before the next meeting in order to solicit written comments.

External relations and country strategy: a follow up (*document MB5/9/10*)

45. While endorsing the approach outlined to it at its 4th meeting in Budapest, the Board had requested that the list of focal points for ECDC's contact with Member States indicates functions rather than titular positions. Such a list had since been compiled, including an outline of how ECDC would propose to proceed to finalize a directory of contact points, for subsequent endorsement by the Board at its 6th meeting in March 2006. Furthermore, a suggestion was made for each Member State to designate a coordination person/function that would have a general overview of all activities between ECDC and partners in that country and would thus facilitate communication.

46. In reviewing the list, the Board expressed its view that the matter was in fact more complicated than initially thought: circumstances were often different from one country to the next, and complications also arose because of the federal structure of some Member States.

47. Contact points would often fall into two different categories, i.e. an active list of institutions and authorities with which ECDC would work on a continuous basis, and a more passive list comprising authorities which only needed to be kept broadly in the picture. Furthermore there would also be an additional list for correspondence and information exchange between ECDC and MS's.

48. The key to the matter was to elaborate a list of national counterparts which would work with ECDC on scientific issues, on surveillance and on training. The Director requested the Members of the Board to identify their own national counterparts, for further discussion at the next meeting in March 2006. It was so decided.

Implementation of the surveillance strategy: next steps (*document MB5/11/9*)

49. The Board had approved the framework for a European surveillance strategy at its 4th meeting in Budapest. A number of follow-up actions, as outlined in document MB5/11/9, had since been discussed with the Advisory Forum at its meeting, 28-29 November. Those implementation steps, as recommended by the Advisory Forum, were now submitted to the Board for its information and guidance.

50. The Board welcomed the follow-up actions by the Centre, and the many important steps which had been taken since the last meeting of the Board, as outlined in the paper.

51. Of all the items on the Board's agenda, this was probably the most important and sensitive. The rules and procedures governing the transfer of the networks to ECDC needed to be crystal clear, and a positive partnership with the national teams would be of key importance. It was also pointed out that the proposed timetable for evaluation and subsequent transfer of networks appeared very ambitious.

52. Regarding the transfer of data to ECDC, the Commission pointed out that this was indeed a contractual obligation. The Centre would nevertheless have to be alert to the potential problems of having officially sanctioned national representation on the networks. One idea advanced was that present national network coordinators could be given a role (e.g. as advisers) with the ECDC, in order to assure smooth transfer and success.

53. As far as the forthcoming evaluation process of the networks was concerned, a potential way forward would be to establish a steering group to oversee the whole evaluation and assessment process in order to ensure credibility and objectivity. It was suggested to include in this group a representative from the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament, representatives from the MB, from WHO and from surveillance institutions outside Europe. Also for the evaluation teams it was suggested to include persons with the required scientific credentials from outside Europe as well as from the Schools of Public Health. WHO should be asked for nominations.

54. It was explained that a great deal of care was being taken with regard to planning the evaluation process. The idea of engaging a leader for the process from outside Europe was a good one, and would be explored further. Regarding the time schedule for the transfer of the networks, a provisional extension of existing arrangement would be considered if the schedule turned out to be too tight.

55. In conclusion, the Chair **recommended** that all Members should urge their national network coordinators to collaborate positively with the ECDC in the difficult process ahead. The Centre would report back to the Board in 2006 on the progress of the various activities. .

Audit issues (*documents MB5/12/12 and MB5/12/15*)

56. The Director recalled that the Audit Committee had had its 1st meeting in Budapest. The conclusions of that meeting were contained in document MB5/12/12, which the Board **endorsed**.

57. At that time, the Audit Committee had suggested that its mandate be broadened to include the role of oversight of the Centre's internal control system; risk assessment; and external control and audits (document MB5/12/15). If the broadened scope was approved, the Audit Committee could also be called upon to express its opinion on the Director's annual report and management plan; the Declaration of Assurance by the Director; the accounts and the Audit Reports. The Management Board **approved** those recommendations.

58. The 2nd meeting of the Audit Committee had been held in the morning of 13th December 2005, immediately before the opening of the Management Board meeting. A key item of the Committee's agenda had been the Commission's 24 Internal Control Standards which ECDC would be gradually adopting as from 2006. The implementation of those standards would be a key issue in ECDC's overall internal management control system, and the Director would report regularly to the Board on progress. The Board **welcomed** the Director's initiative.

Training strategy in intervention epidemiology in Europe (*document MB5/13/17*)

59. Training in intervention epidemiology is another key priority of the Centre, as set out in Article 9 (6) of Regulation 851/2204. In order to meet the Centre's obligations in that regard, and to follow up on the tasks highlighted in the 2005 – 2006 programme of work, a 5-year training policy had been drafted in collaboration with the European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET).

60. A meeting with all Member States had also taken place in Stockholm on 30 November – 2 December to review priority training needs of the various countries for 2006 and 2007; to prepare an implementation plan corresponding to those needs; and to reach agreement on a protocol for assessing future training requirements.

61. The Board noted and **endorsed** the strategy outlined in the document and the priority areas for 2006 resulting from the recommendations of the Member States consultation.

Other issues

Reimbursement of travel expenses of Members of the Management Board (*for discussion*)

62. Reference was made to the letter of the Chair of the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament, sent to the Chair of the Management Board on the issue of reimbursement of expenses for the two members of the European Parliament on the Board. In order to cover their expenses, and as an interim measure, the Director proposed to double their per diem rate.

63. At the Board's next meeting, the Director would follow-up on this issue with a paper on reimbursement for all experts attending ECDC meetings in Sweden. That paper would propose a per diem at a realistic level that could cover the actual costs incurred by the experts. The Management Board **approved** the steps proposed by the Director.

Follow up on the informal briefing from the new Members of the EU, Budapest, 27 October 2005

64. Informal notes prepared by the co-chairs Tiiu Aro and Andrew Amato Gauci were distributed to the members at the Board meeting in Budapest. Suggestions made by this informal briefing had been taken into account when developing the work plans for 2006. The Board **took note** of the Director's orientation of the issue

Dates for future meetings of the Board in 2006 (*document MB5/14/16*)

65. In order to enable better planning and preparation of meetings of the Management Board, the Director proposed that dates and scope of the meetings in 2006 should preferably be agreed to at the present meeting.

66. She suggested holding 3 meetings of the Board in 2006, tentatively scheduled for: 16-17 March; 20-21 June and 12-13 December. The first and third meetings could deal with the specific issues mandated by Regulation 851/2004 and for which the Management Board had important statutory functions to fulfil, while the second meeting could be used as an opportunity for a more informal session, focusing on briefing and brainstorming. The Management Board **approved** the Director's proposals.

67. In addition, the Member from Greece extended a provisional invitation for the June 2006 meeting, subject to final approval by the responsible authorities. Likewise, an invitation to Poland for the June 2007 meeting was also extended. The Board thanked the two Members for their kind invitations.

ECDC Management Board press meeting, 14 December 2005

68. Between 10:30 and 11:30 the Management Board held a press meeting at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' International Press Centre. The meeting was opened by Dr Marc Sprenger who gave an overview of progress made by ECDC over the past 12 months and gave details of the work plan and provisional budget for 2006 agreed by the Board on 13 December. A panel of speakers from the MB then discussed various aspects of ECDC's work. The panel was composed of: Vice Chair Professor Minerva Melpomeni Malliori (European Parliament), Mr Fernand Sauer (DG SANCO), Dr Hubert Hrabcik (Austria), Dr Vyatautas Bakasenas (Lithuania), Dr Andrew Amato Gauci (Malta), Mrs Iréne Nilsson-Carlsson (Sweden), Mrs. Zsuzsanna Jakab (ECDC). Following an initial set of questions posed by Ben Duncan of ECDC questions were then asked by the following media: German International Radio, Austria Presse Agentur (APA), Agence France Presse (AFP) and Associated Press Newswires (AP). The Swedish news agency TT also attended the press conference, as did a photographer from the Swedish picture news agency Pressen Bild. A monitoring report of articles generated will be circulated to the Board by ECDC.

69. The speakers on the panel gave their impressions of ECDC from the perspective of their EU Institution (Commission, Parliament) or their Member States. In addition, Professor Malliori gave a view of how ECDC fitted into the larger picture of global health security, while Dr. Hrabcik outlined the priorities of the forthcoming Austrian Presidency in the area of health. They all acknowledged the work done by ECDC in 2005. Questions from journalists focused on probing the real added value of ECDC to poorer Member States, such as Lithuania, avian influenza and pandemic preparedness

Retirement of Mr Fernand Sauer

70. On the occasion of his forthcoming retirement, the Chair thanked Mr Sauer on behalf of the Board for his vision and energy in enabling the creation of ECDC. He had, more than any other, truly played the role of a "founding father" of the Centre. His devotion and support had been crucial and much appreciated by all. The Board extended its best wishes for a healthy and happy retirement.

Closure

71. In closing the 5th meeting of the Board, the Chair extended his thanks to the Director and her team at the ECDC.
