

**MARC SPRENGER, ECDC DIRECTOR**

**HEARING ON H1N1, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, 5 OCTOBER 2010**

**FINAL: 5 OCTOBER 2010**

**QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED - What changes should be made to EU response planning, in particular with regard to ensuring independence, excellence and transparency of decision-making?**

### **SPEAKING NOTE**

- Chairman, honourable members,
- Much of what I want to say has already been said by previous speakers.
- In particular, I strongly agree that our objective today should be to see how to improve our plans and capacities for the next pandemic, rather than to congratulate or blame.
- At the risk of overlapping a bit with what earlier speakers, I would like to give you ECDC three key lessons for the future.

- **Lesson number one** is that public health experts need to produce more sophisticated early assessments of the level and type of threat posed by new viruses. I will come back to this in a minute.
- **Lesson number two** is that our analysis of the level of risk that justifies public investment in developing and deploying new vaccines – either for the population as a whole or for specific risk groups – needs to be more sophisticated.
- This should include socio-economic analyses of the costs, benefits and risks of launching such vaccination campaigns.
- In the case of a pandemic or any other 'emergency' vaccine it will be especially important to have formal check points where earlier decisions are reviewed in the light of new analyses and information
- **Lesson number three** is that our risk communication needs to become more sophisticated.

- The communication landscape has evolved, for example with growing use of social media. We need to better understand what messages and what media are most effective in reaching people.
- The pandemic also taught us that health care workers are of key importance. If they are not convinced by our messages, then the wider public will not be convinced.
- **Let me return briefly to lesson number one** – the need to produce more sophisticated early risk assessments.
- In the next influenza pandemic, I would want ECDC to again include more parameters in its risk assessments than just the number of cases and the geographical spread of the virus.
- I want more analysis on factors such as the severity of disease, mortality, hospitalisations, risk groups, morbidity and so on.
- Crucially, this should be analysis based on top quality data from Europe.

- Producing these more sophisticated assessments means we need smarter, more sophisticated data collection systems on influenza in Europe.
- These systems need to be in place now for seasonal influenza. We learned in 2009 to 2010 that creating new systems in the middle of a pandemic just does not work.
- ECDC can play a leading role in developing these systems.
- However, other partners – particularly our counterparts in the Member States – will need to invest time, money and effort in developing these systems.
- **I would emphasise that investment in national public health institutes, their laboratories and the systems that feed into them – is absolutely key.**

- Investment in national laboratories and institutes is the only way to ensure excellent data.
- And it is only if we have excellent data that ECDC can produce excellent risk assessments.
- Thank you Chairman.

ENDS