



Conclusion and Recommendation of the MB based on the External Evaluation of ECDC

Document MB Extraordinary 1/5 adopted by the ECDC Management Board at its First Extraordinary Meeting in Stockholm, 23 September 2008, including amendments made at that meeting

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Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the MB

General conclusions based on the external evaluation covering the first two years of ECDC's existence (2005-2007)

The Management Board concludes that:

a) Work of ECDC and relations with Member States and stakeholders:

1. The ECDC is an independent centre of scientific excellence and has made a significant contribution to fighting against communicable diseases and therefore is considered as justified and it can therefore start deepening its activities.
2. The ECDC has performed well but improvements in efficiency will be increasingly needed, for example improvements in the Centre's information and project management systems, which are already underway.
3. The funding of ECDC, established in coordination with the Commission, and as laid down in the Financial Perspective 2007-2013 (60 M€ by 2010)- is adequate for its current mandate. The Management Board considers that it should be recognized that additional funding would be necessary if new functions and activities were to be added to the Centre's portfolio.
4. Some improvements in the governance of the ECDC are needed and the MB recommends to the Director to continue to keep its structure under review and further improve efficiency by establishing more coordination and interaction between the functional units and horizontal disease specific programmes, based on a more cohesive approach.
5. Regarding the Governance of ECDC, the MB decided to carefully analyze the role of the Advisory Forum in the light of the newly designated Competent Bodies and their functions in the ECDC architecture, and to consider the possible need for a Bureau of the MB to prepare decisions and facilitate consensus in the discussions,.
6. The ECDC has a clear presence on the international stage and is building good working relationships with partners.
7. From the external evaluation it is clear that Member States, with substantial resources, sometimes might see ECDC's work as overlapping their own initiatives, versus other Member States with less resources and capacities, where ECDC's work is seen as more supportive and positive. In this regard the MB recommends that ECDC conducts a joint review with Member States to analyse the needs, expectations and capacity of Member States as a means to guide the Centre's future work.
8. It is obvious that ECDC demands increasing amount of scientific information, data and experts from all Member States, and this may place a burden, in particular on the ones with less resources and capacity. The MB recommended that ECDC be asked to take that matter into account in its cooperation with Member States.

b) Risk assessment, risk management and risk communication

1. From the external evaluation it became clear that the distinction between risk assessment and risk management is not always clear to everyone. Although to all those closely associated with ECDC, i.e. the Management Board, the Advisory Forum and the Centre, it was clear that ECDC's role is risk assessment. Upon request of the Member States, the Commission and other Community agencies, the ECDC may have an advisory role in risk management, but this latter remained a prerogative of the Member States, supported by the coordination of the Commission. ECDC therefore should continue to operate within the framework of its Founding Regulation as well as the Strategic Multiannual Work Programme for 2007-2013, approved by the MB, with focus on risk assessment. This function should be recalled in all ECDC work settings and groups on a regular basis in order to raise awareness. Should there be a need, the MB should put this issue on its agenda and review the steps required to achieve this focus on risk assessment.
2. Risk communication is an action carried out by the ECDC, the European Commission and the Member States. The Founding Regulation mandates ECDC to communicate with all interested parties, including the general public. ECDC's risk communication should however, in the first instance, always be geared to policy makers in the Member States as a support to their communication at national level and for the Commission as a support to their communication at EU level. The MB therefore recommended that such communication support, and related scientific advice, should always be drafted in a language that is appropriate and easy to understand for national and Community policy makers and risk managers.
3. The Member States will generally be the first source of information for the citizens of each country. However, the MB recommended that the role, activities and results of ECDC's work should, in accordance with Article 12 of the Founding Regulation, be better communicated to the general public in the Member States. Alternatives on how this could be achieved could be developed by the Centre and discussed in a meeting of the Management Board.

c) Extension of Mandate

1. The MB confirms that ECDC's medium-term mandate – as laid down both through the Financial Perspective 2007-2013 and the Strategic Multiannual Programme – was Communicable Diseases and other health threats mentioned in Article 3 of the Founding Regulation. The Centre's priorities for the next few years should focus on a consolidation of these tasks.
2. The MB reconfirmed that ECDC already has a clear responsibility to judge if further communicable diseases, in line with Article 3 of the Founding Regulation, should be added to its portfolio as needed. A decision in that regard should always be guided by an analysis of added value to European Member States. The same criteria of added value to the Member States should also be applied with regard to extension of the geographical mandate beyond the EU Member Countries, or with regard to collaborative agreements with other agencies outside the EU, also involved in communicable disease prevention and control.

3. For the future of ECDC, the MB expects that the Centre clarifies further its role in the European microbiology area, with the support of national microbiology focal points and competent bodies.
4. It was clear that the Commission would be responsible for the review of an extension of the Centre's mandate, following a careful analysis of the needs at the EU level, possibly leading to a proposal for an amendment of the existing legal basis. The MB took the view that if initiatives in public health were to be put under the mandate of a Community agency, e.g. health monitoring or alert systems, then locating these at an already existing agency, such as ECDC, together with adequate financial resources, would be more coherent, less expensive and preferable to establishing a new Agency for such purposes.

MB's views on the External Evaluation performed by ECORYS, covering the first two years of ECDC's existence (May 2005 – July 2007)

Introduction

1. The external evaluation of ECDC, undertaken in order "to assess the impact of the Centre on the prevention and control of human disease and the possible need to extend the scope of the Centre's mission to other relevant Community-level activities of public health", has been required as per Article 31 of ECDC's Founding Regulation.
2. The evaluation was performed by ECORYS Nederland BV, which presented its final report on 15 August 2008. A Steering Committee of the MB had provided oversight to the process, and had guided and interacted with the contractor during the course of the evaluation, in order to ensure that it proceeded in accordance with the approved terms of reference. The Steering Committee met 5 times: on 9 February and 14 December 2007, as well as 17 March, 16 June and 24 July 2008. All meetings were held at ECDC in Stockholm, with the exception of the June 2008 meeting which was held in Helsinki. In addition to its formal meetings, members of the Steering Committee also held a teleconference on 12 November 2007.
3. The Management Board also established a Drafting Group whose mandate had been to independently examine ECORYS' conclusions and recommendations, on behalf of the full Board and prepare a document for discussion and subsequent adoption by the MB with the views of the MB on the external evaluation. The MB Drafting Group had 3 meetings during late summer and autumn of 2008: 24-25 July in Stockholm, 12 September in Vienna, and 22 September in Stockholm.
4. The present report summarizes the discussions, conclusions and recommendations, and is presented to the full MB in accordance with Article 31 (2) of the Founding Regulation, so that the Board may "issue to the Commission such recommendations as may be necessary regarding changes to the Centre, its working practices and the scope of its mission."

Structure of the Report

5. The present report contains two sections, as follows: The Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the MB, which summarizes the views of the Management Board on the work of ECDC during the period under review and the Main Report, which contains the MB's views on the External Evaluation performed by ECORYS. The latter discusses and comments on each of ECORYS 13 Conclusions, as presented by the contractor in the Executive Summary. For easy reference, the report has been structured into the following 3 sections:

- Work of ECDC and relations with Member States and Stakeholders
- Risk assessment, risk management and risk communications
- Extension of Mandate

Work of ECDC and relations with Member States and Stakeholders

a) Performance

Conclusion 1: "The existence of ECDC is considered as justified and it can therefore start deepening its activities."

The MB endorsed this conclusion.

Conclusion 6: "The ECDC is an independent centre of scientific excellence".

The MB endorsed this conclusion.

Conclusion 7: "The funding of ECDC is adequate for its current mandate."

The MB stressed that, while the financial framework up to 2013 provides adequate funding for the Centre's current tasks as it was established in coordination with the Commission, and as included in the Financial Perspective 2007-2013, it should be recognized that additional funding would be necessary if new functions and activities were to be added to the Centre's portfolio.

Conclusion 8: "The ECDC has performed well but improvements in efficiency will be increasingly needed"

The MB recalled that questions of efficiency and working processes, and the balance between admin/supportive functions versus core operational activities, were all key issues which the MB carefully monitored as part of its oversight functions (Article 14 of Founding Regulation). It also noted that improvements in the Centre's information and project management systems were under active implementation.

Conclusion 9: "It is a challenge for ECDC to make the matrix structure work".

One of the MB's core functions is to have an ongoing dialogue with the Director on both her management practices and the Centre's organizational structure. The matrix structure would continue to evolve: as time passes and disease-specific work comes more to the foreground, ECDC will have to continuously review and adapt its organizational structure to discharge its functions in the best possible manner.

Conclusion 10: "Improvements in the governance of the ECDC are needed."

1. Day-to-day management of the Centre: On this issue, the MB expressed its full confidence in the Director and in the close and on-going dialogue with her. As part of that dialogue, **the MB recommended** that ECDC should keep its structure under review and improve efficiency by establishing more coordination between the functional units and horizontal disease specific programmes, based on a more cohesive approach. It also noted the Director's comment on further progress with the newly adopted internal procedures to ensure a close interaction between horizontal and vertical functions.

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2. Functioning of the Management Board: The MB was of the opinion that ECORYS comments under this section revealed a lack of understanding on how the Board worked in practice. The composition of the MB was determined through political decisions in the Member States. Nevertheless, the work in the Board was democratic and provided equal opportunities to all Members. The MB did therefore not accept ECORYS' conclusions and recommendation in this sub-section.

3. Governance: Under this issue, **the MB decided** to carefully analyze the role of the Advisory Forum in the light of the newly designated Competent Bodies and their functions in the ECDC architecture and to consider the possible need for a Bureau of the MB to prepare decisions and facilitate consensus in the discussions. Both issues were central to the governance of ECDC and would need careful analysis and broad consultations among Member States. The question of the Advisory Forum versus a Scientific Committee would in all likelihood also require a change to the Founding Regulation, unless the Scientific Committee is established as a Committee of the AF. For those reasons, **the Management Board decided** to put the matter on its agenda and initiate a broad-based study of it. In addition, the outcome of the interinstitutional dialogue on the future vision and governance of the agencies is also of utmost importance to shape these issues in a more coherent way.

b) Relations with Member States and Stakeholders

Conclusion 4: *"The ECDC has a clear presence on the international stage".*
The MB endorsed this conclusion.

Conclusion 5: *"The ECDC is building good working relationships with partners."*
The MB endorsed ECORYS' observations and pointed to the importance of building up professional networks in all of the Centre's areas of work. It also supported the recommendation under this section to strengthen the day - to - day collaboration with international partners, to the extent possible.

The MB also recommended that ECDC staff should strengthen their knowledge of the European institutional environment and national public health systems to further improve effective collaboration with Member States.

Conclusion 11: *"The ECDC is perceived to be relevant and important."*
While the MB endorsed the general conclusion, ECORYS had raised two important issues under this section:

The first issue concerned Member States with substantial resources which sometimes might see ECDC's work as overlapping their own initiatives, versus Member States with less resources and capacities, where ECDC's work might be seen as more supportive and positive. In this regard, the MB recognized that there were different expectations or needs for different countries and **recommended** that ECDC conduct a joint review with Member States of ECORYS observation, to guide the Centre's future work.

The second issue concerned the increasing amount of scientific information, data and experts which ECDC demands from Member States, and that this may place a burden on Member States, in particular the ones with less resources and capacity. The MB recalled Article 4 of Decision 2119/98/EC which made reporting on the 49 diseases highlighted in that Decision mandatory in the same way as reporting on public health threats that may have the potential to affect other EU countries through the EWRS system. Nevertheless, the burden placed on Member States was recognized, and **the MB recommended** that ECDC be asked to take that matter always into account in its cooperation with Member States.

Conclusion 12: "The ECDC has made a significant contribution to fighting against communicable diseases."

The MB endorsed this conclusion.

As far as future orientations within the communicable diseases area was concerned, **the MB recommended:**

- That ECDC should take its own responsibility to judge if new communicable diseases, in line with Article 3 of the Founding Regulation, should be added to its portfolio as needed. A decision in that regard should always be guided by an analysis of added value to European Member States.
- For the future of ECDC, the MB expects that the Centre clarifies further its role in the European microbiology area, with the support of national microbiology focal points and competent bodies.

Risk assessment, risk management and risk communications

Conclusion 3: "The distinction between risk assessment and risk management is not always clear."

In addition to that general conclusion, ECORYS had also made a recommendation that the Founding Regulation might need to be revised in order to clarify the terms "scientific advice" and "Competent Body". That issue had however already been exhaustively discussed and minuted in earlier meetings of the MB, and the Board did not see any need for further reviews at this stage.

The question of risk assessment versus risk management was however an important issue which merited careful attention. To all those closely associated with ECDC, i.e. both the Management Board, the Advisory Forum and the Centre, it was clear that ECDC's role was risk assessment. Upon request of the Member States, the Commission and other Community agencies, the ECDC may have an advisory role in risk management, but this latter remained a prerogative of the Member States, supported by the coordination of the Commission. The Director of ECDC referred to the discussion on this issue at the Informal Council meeting as part of health security item in September 2008 under the French Presidency and also recalled Regulation 851 and the SMP 2007-2013, approved by the MB, which make this clear.

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Whereas this issue was clear to the key stakeholders of ECDC as well as to ECDC Director and staff, it would be helpful to further advocate the role and responsibility of ECDC in the outside world. Should there be a need, the Management Board should see how to promote this issue further.

Conclusion 2: "Risk communication is a joint action of the ECDC, the European Commission and the Member States".

The Founding Regulation mandates ECDC to communicate with all interested parties, including the general public. The Member States will generally be the first source of information for the citizens of each country. ECDC's risk communication should in the first instance always be geared to policy makers in the Member States. **The MB therefore recommended** that such communication, and related scientific advice, should always be drafted in a language that is appropriate and easy to understand for national policy makers.

The MB also recommended that the role, activities and results of ECDC's work should, in accordance with Article 12 of the Founding Regulation, be better communicated to the general public in the Member States. Alternatives on how this could be achieved could be developed by the Centre and discussed in a meeting of the Management Board.

Extension of Mandate

Conclusion 13: "The ECDC should focus on a consolidation of current tasks."

The MB Drafting Group, at its 1st meeting, had an extensive discussion on ECORYS scenario analysis and conclusions with regard to a possible extension of ECDC's mandate to areas beyond communicable diseases. The Drafting Group's general conclusion had been that the contractor had not adequately covered the extension issue laid out in Question 14 of the terms of reference.

The MB recalled that ECDC's medium-term mandate - as laid down both through the Financial Perspective 2007-2013 and the Strategic Multiannual Programme – was Communicable Diseases, and the Centre's priorities for the next few years should therefore be to consolidate its work within that framework.

As far as the question of health monitoring, which had been highlighted in Article 31 was concerned, the MB pointed to the challenges in establishing reliable and comparable systems to monitor non-communicable diseases across all Member States. The task to build up a coherent European-wide system for health monitoring of non-communicable diseases would therefore be a major undertaking, and costly, though an important investment for public health in Europe.

It was clear that the Commission would be responsible for the review of an extension of the Centre's mandate, following a careful analysis of the needs at the EU level, possibly leading to a proposal for an amendment of the existing legal basis. The MB took the view that if initiatives in public health were to be put under the mandate of a Community

agency, e.g. health monitoring or alert systems, then locating these at an already existing agency, such as ECDC, together with adequate financial resources, would be more coherent, less expensive and preferable to establishing a new Agency for such purposes.

It was also recalled that the present ongoing horizontal evaluation of agencies and the inter-institutional dialogue towards a joint future vision, did not favour the setting up of new agencies, but rather expansion of the mandate of existing ones. From a financial perspective it would also be significantly cheaper to expand the scope of an existing Centre than to set up a new one, in view of the investments already made in infrastructure, buildings, IT-systems and administrative expertise.

The recommendations of the MB, on the steps the Commission might want to consider on the extension issue, were as follows:

- From an organizational and financial perspective, ECDC should focus on communicable diseases over the next few years, in line with the Strategic Multiannual Programme for 2007-2013.
- Any possible extension of the mandate of ECDC would be contingent on adequate and long-term funding, and should be reviewed under the leadership of the Commission, in preparation for the next Financial Perspective.
- As far as health monitoring and health information was concerned, a rigorous analysis of who does what, of existing systems across Europe, and the needs at EU level, should be carried out before this issue could be properly addressed – including a careful analysis of cost implications.
