

**ECDC Management Board**

**MB13/Minutes  
23 September 2008**



**Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the  
ECDC Management Board  
Helsinki, 17–18 June 2008**

*Adopted by the Management Board at its First Extraordinary Meeting,  
23 September 2008*

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## Summary of decisions

The Management Board:

- adopted the minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Management Board (Stockholm, 18-19 March 2008), after stipulating the deletion of a sentence;
- approved to set up of a Drafting Group that will draft the Management Board's views and recommendations on the external evaluation to the Commission, and agreed to hold an extraordinary MB meeting in September to finalize the recommendations before the end of the mandate of the current members of the Board;
- adopted a favourable MB opinion on the final annual accounts for 2007 in view of requesting the discharge of the Director to the European Parliament and in accordance with the Financial Regulation;
- approved the supplementary and amending budget 2008, as well as the proposed allocation of these additional funds;
- approved a statement from the MB to be included in the minutes, reflecting the Board's strong concerns on the negative consequences of a possible reserve on ECDC's 2009 budget and a freeze on the establishment plan;
- adopted the revised version of ECDC's Multiannual Staff Policy Plan 2009-2011, after requesting that a sentence on a planned ECDC liaison office in Brussels be deleted, as this matter will need further discussion in a future MB meeting.

The Management Board also:

- noted the progress made in the activities of the Centre and thanked the Director for her leadership and the staff for their excellent work;
- noted the conclusions and recommendations of the draft of the final report on the external evaluation of the Centre presented by the external consultants from ECORYS and discussed several issues, including the issue of the expansion of mandate;
- noted progress on issues related to the Seat Agreement of ECDC;
- noted the issues discussed during the Audit Committee meeting held on 16 June 2008, including the topic of the review of the treasury function.
- discussed the implications that a possible reserve on ECDC's 2009 budget and a freeze on the establishment plan would have on the Centre's activities, and therefore proposed that the Chair of the MB should write letters

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to the EP ENVI Committee, DG Budget and the European Commissioner for Health expressing their concern;

- noted the preliminary ECDC work programme priorities for 2009;
- held a preliminary discussion on the MB meetings planned for 2009, agreeing on the importance of having three meetings per year, one of them to be held outside of Sweden and hosted by a Member State, and suggested a revision of the proposed dates for next year's meetings.

### **Opening and welcome by the Chair**

1. The Chair opened the 13th meeting of the Management Board (MB), welcomed all representatives and expressed his thanks to the Finnish representative for providing the venue with its congenial setting.

### **Address by Paula Risikko, Finnish Minister of Health and Social Services**

2. Paula Risikko, Finnish Minister of Health and Social Services, welcomed the members of the Management Board. In her address she emphasised that the establishment of ECDC was a far-sighted decision and that Finland, as all other Member States, understands that combating diseases cannot take place without cooperation.

3. Ms Risikko appreciated ECDC's high-level scientific advice to the Member States and acknowledged that all ECDC networks were built with great skill.

4. Ms Risikko also mentioned the first external evaluation currently in progress at ECDC. The results of this evaluation were awaited with high interest, particularly in regard to possibly extending the Centre's mission and mandate.

### **Presentation by Terhi Kilpi, Director of the Department for Vaccines (KTL), Finland**

5. Terhi Kilpi, Director of the Department for Vaccines (KTL), Finland, gave a presentation entitled: "National Immunisation Programme: From Vaccine Research to Policy and Implementation".

6. In her presentation, Ms Kilpi outlined all major steps needed to protect the population through vaccination, including research and surveillance, expert advice and implementation.

7. Ms Kilpi closed her presentation by remarking that her department would like to cooperate with ECDC and other EU bodies on issues like post-vaccination safety surveillance, cost-effectiveness models and the description of disease burden.

8. In response to a question from the floor, Ms Kilpi explained that due to the low rate of cervical cancer in Finland, there was no rush in her country to introduce an HPV vaccination programme. According to Ms Kilpi, the public health benefit of an HPV vaccination was uncertain.

9. Another question raised focused on the adverse effects of influenza vaccinations. In Finland, Ms Kilpi explained, a study found that influenza caused a considerable disease burden in children. Therefore Finland decided to go ahead with the vaccination of small children. As to the BCG vaccine programme, Finland experienced side effects — notably a rapid increase in the incidence of lymph node abscesses — that were 10 times higher than

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before when it switched to a new Danish vaccine after Evans Vaccines Ltd discontinued the production of its BCG vaccine. The Finnish National Advisory Committee on Vaccination, however, considers that the risk of children in the risk groups to contract tuberculosis is so high that the benefits from the BCG vaccine outweigh the adverse effects.

10. According to Ms Kilpi, there was a small anti-vaccination movement in Finland, but its scope and influence remained very limited.

11. When asked, Ms Kilpi said that she was very satisfied with the recent development in all aspects of EU collaboration. Vaccination safety remained one of the key issues, and what she and her institute would like to see in this context was more work on the adverse affects of vaccinations, particularly when a clustering of cases is observed. Ms Kilpi also expressed a fondness for the POLYMOD project and its approach to cost effectiveness (see [http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/ssp/polymod\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/ssp/polymod_en.htm)).

12. A Management Board member asked whether ECDC could provide a reliable record on the state of affairs on HPV vaccination in the different Member States. So far, the only records available were from the vaccine manufacturers, which raised questions of objectivity. In his response, Johan Giesecke, ECDC's chief scientist, pointed out that there were no plans to collect such data.

### **Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda** (*documents MB13/2 Rev. 1, MB13/3 Rev. 1*)

13. The Chair noted that apologies were received from DG Research and Iceland. After day one, the Swedish member, Dr Irène Nilsson-Carlsson, needed to leave the meeting.

14. The agenda was adopted without any changes or amendments.

15. The Chair asked the participants to declare any interests they may have with regards to the agenda items and to use the form distributed in advance by the Secretariat. As to his declaration of interest, the Chair referred to the ECDC website. The member for Denmark, Else Smith, declared that her country hosts a network for vaccine preventable diseases. The representative from the EC, John Ryan, declared that he is a member of the EC Unit that is responsible for treating ECDC matters; he also declared that he is a member of the MB Steering Committee.

### **Item 2: Adoption of the draft minutes of the 12th meeting of the Management Board in Stockholm, 18–19 March 2008** (*document MB13/4*)

16. A member of the Board asked to only keep the first sentence of paragraph 58 (draft minutes of the 12th meeting) and discard the rest of the paragraph. There were no objections to this motion. Following this motion, the minutes of the 12th meeting were approved as presented in document MB13/4.

### **Item 9: Director's briefing on ECDC's main activities since the last Management Board meeting**

17. The Director first thanked the Finnish government for its hospitality and extended her thanks to the Finnish Minister of Health and Social Services and the Director of the Department for Vaccines (KTL). She then reported on ECDC's most recent activities. These included a visit in April to meet with Androulla Vassiliou, the new EU Commissioner for Health; the participation of the Director in an informal Council meeting in Brdo (Slovenia), on 17–18 April, where she gave a presentation of the AMR/HCAI situation; the visit to ECDC in May by members of the European Parliament/ENVI Committee; the participation of the Director on 10 June in a formal Council meeting where she presented the TB Action Plan and launched the logo for the European Antibiotic Awareness Day (scheduled for 18 November).

18. The Director also highlighted the different topics addressed during the Advisory Forum meeting in May and then proceeded to outline the activities in the individual units at ECDC. At the conclusion of the Director's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.

19. The Vice-Chair reminded ECDC that it would be helpful for the MB members to receive a list of ECDC staff members, listed by unit and complete with contact information. The request was passed on to the Head of Administration.

20. Copies of the slides presented by the Director during this agenda item were distributed to the members of the Board.

### **Item 6: Update on ECDC External Evaluation** (*document MB13/12*)

21. The discussion on this agenda item consisted of two parts: First with the presence of ECORYS, where they presented their report and questions for clarification were put forward to them, as well as some comments on the procedure and structure of the report, including the report of the MB Steering Committee. Then, when ECORYS left, a more detailed discussion started on some of the content issues, as the MB will have to issue a report with its own views on the external evaluation. A thorough discussion was held on the future mandate of ECDC.

22. Dr Hubert Hrabcik (Austria), Chair of the Steering Committee for ECDC's first external evaluation, reported on his committee's discussions concerning the draft of the final report of the evaluation that ECORYS had produced. The Chair of the Steering Committee described the evaluation report as useful, yet lacking in some detail. Overall, the report was going according to schedule. As far as time was concerned, the Chair of the Steering Committee predicted a race against time. The evaluation and the accompanying documents needed to be finalised as soon as possible.

23. Two members of the ECORYS evaluation team, Ms Wija Oortwijn and Ms Judith Mathijssen, gave a detailed presentation, explaining not only the

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objectives and methodology that the evaluation report is based on, but also outlining the main conclusions of their evaluation of ECDC. Their detailed list of conclusions presented a picture of ECDC as a still somewhat nascent agency that is already solidly footed in the public health sector and very successful in delivering a real public health service to all Member States.

24. At the conclusion of the ECORYS presentation, a member inquired whether there had been marked regional differences in the survey. ECORYS replied that this had not been the case and that the majority of stakeholders had answered in a very similar fashion, advocating a consolidation of ECDC's activities. An expansion had not been ruled out, but certainly was not recommended for the near future.

25. Several questions from the Management Board aimed at the methodology employed by the external consultants. The ECORYS representatives replied that all interviewees were approached directly, that one third was interviewed face-to-face, while the rest was interviewed by phone. Of all the Management Board members, only about 50% participated in the survey; officials at the national health institutes displayed an equally low participation rate.

26. A member of the Board noted that despite its comprehensiveness, many of the findings of the ECORYS report were merely subjective or statements from individual stakeholders. She also pointed out that an evaluation of how the Management Board itself operates and how it could be made more effective was missing.

27. Several members objected to the phrasing of questions in the original ECORYS questionnaire. Some of the questions, one member contended, were already suggesting an answer to the participants. Another member remarked that some questions were written as either-or questions, despite the fact that there were many different possible answers.

28. One member pointed out that despite assumed or actual methodological shortcomings, the Management Board should ask itself whether the conclusions of the evaluation were relevant. The paramount goal of the Management Board, he added, should be to address the problems at ECDC that the ECORYS report pointed out.

29. The ECORYS representatives confirmed that they themselves had struggled with the same problems. They emphasised how difficult it was to evaluate a relatively young organisation without having a set of performance indicators from this organisation. Instead, ECORYS developed their own set of indicators. The conclusions ECORYS arrived at were not only based on surveys and interviews but also on desktop research. ECORYS acknowledged that the Management Board issue could have been covered better, but at this point in time the document represented the 'best report possible'. Methodologically, the report always made clear how ECORYS had linked the evidence to the conclusions.

30. ECORYS then presented an overview of recommendations. Five areas were covered: Strategy; structure, management, and working practice;

relationship with partners; legislation; and expansion of mandate. (The details are available in the ECORYS handout distributed during the MB meeting.)

31. While the first four sets of recommendations were uncontroversial, the expansion of the mandate was intensively debated. A member questioned the recommendation that ECDC should ‘within the coming five years [...] consolidate and build on its activities within its current mandate’, calling the five-year waiting period ‘arbitrary’: ECDC might be young as an institution, he added, but not as far as the experience of its people was concerned. With this expertise, ECDC could easily forge ahead.

32. Several members stated that they considered the ECORYS recommendations as sound, while one member cautioned that the Steering Committee might have some reservations and should be heard first.

33. Dr Hubert Hrabcik (Austria), Chair of the Steering Committee for ECDC’s first external evaluation, then gave a detailed account of his committee’s discussions on 16 June. Although the picture presented by the ECORYS report was rather multi-faceted, his personal impression was that ECDC had ‘done a good job’. The Committee had agreed to ask for a few structural changes in the report: the executive summary should be moved to the end of the document, more exposure should be given to the evidence that formed the basis of the conclusions, more compelling links should be established between the conclusions and the annex, sub-groups should be mentioned to weigh the answers, and an additional chapter on financial analysis should be added. A further chapter should be added focusing on the recent developments at ECDC. In addition, the report should distinguish more clearly between recommendations based on ECORYS’ analysis and those based on interviews or surveys. Another area that needed work was the potential expansion of ECDC’s activities (Q13/Q14); more detailed answers and recommendations were called for. Finally, some factual mistakes and inaccurate statements needed to be corrected.

34. The ensuing discussion mainly supported the proposals given by the Steering Committee for ECDC’ first external evaluation; one caveat, however, concerned the Committee’s suggestion to focus more on sub-groups. ‘Splitting things up too much in the main text is not necessary’, one member said, as one could always refer to the tables in the annex. He also pointed out that an update on the most recent developments at ECDC should not be added, as this would require a different methodology and also water down the original report.

35. The MB Chair thanked the Steering Committee for its work in guiding and overseeing the process of evaluation in such an efficient way. He also pointed out that ECORYS’ conclusions had to be eventually translated to Management Board recommendations. To facilitate matters, he proposed the establishment of a small drafting group for the production of a set of final Management Board recommendations based on the ECORYS report. Since time was of the essence, the MB Chair also recommended an additional meeting of the Management Board to finish this task before the end of the

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mandate of the current Management Board. The MB Chair suggested that the following members should join the drafting group: Representatives of the European Parliament, Commission, the Chair of the Steering Committee and several volunteers from the Member States.

### **Informal presentation: European Antibiotic Awareness Day**

36. Immediately following lunch break, Dominique Monnet (ECDC) gave a presentation on the first European Antibiotic Awareness Day, scheduled for 18 November. European Antibiotic Awareness Day is an EU initiative, in partnership with a number of counterparts from all over Europe. This campaign is aimed at the general public, delivering a message of using antibiotics responsibly. In response to questions from the Board, Mr Monnet explained that only the name of the day as on the main logo (pill and stethoscope) will be translated and provided in each country's language(s). Other materials would have to be translated locally. Several members welcomed the initiative in unequivocal terms. One member criticised ECDC for writing letters to too many government levels.

### **Item 6: Update on ECDC External Evaluation (continued)**

37. When the Management Board reconvened after its lunch break, Dr Hrabcik, Chair of the Steering Committee for ECDC's first external evaluation, reported that as a result of the discussion in the morning, the final ECORYS report should not include an additional section on new developments at ECDC. He also made it clear that no major rewrite of the report was necessary.

38. In moving forward with the establishment of a drafting group — open to any member — that would write a commentary on the Ecorys report and formulate the Management Board's views on the external evaluation to be submitted to the Commission, the issue was put to a vote. It was also proposed to hold an additional one-day Management Board meeting in September to finalise all issues connected to ECORYS' evaluation report. The Board approved this motion.

39. Volunteers from Member States for this drafting group were Slovenia, Italy, Estonia, Denmark, Austria, France, Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, as well as the European Parliament, the Commission and the MB Chair. It was also mentioned that a rapporteur will work with the drafting group.

40. To further discuss issues related to the external evaluation, the MB Chair announced a change of the agenda. Items 10 and 11 would be skipped, while items 3, 7, 4, 12 would be moved to the next day.

41. The Chair then initiated a discussion on ECDC's mandate. One member advocated the enlargement of ECDC's geographical scope to include all neighbouring countries, but left it open whether ECDC should cover diseases outside the area of communicable diseases.

42. One member pointed out that ECDC's duty was to be consistent and remain within its current scope.
43. Further comments were made in reference to ECDC's scope. As was pointed out by one member, the ECORYS report stated that ECDC 'should not add new scope', which was not what the PowerPoint slides shown during the ECORYS presentation said. As to her country's position, it was clearly in favour of consolidating the current work.
44. Other member echoed a similar point of view. One member with a dissenting opinion stated that ECDC should decide which emerging disease it wanted to include and that ECDC's scope should not artificially be limited — as long as the Commission and the Management Board were informed. His understanding of Recommendation XIV was that ECDC should be able to respond to unforeseen threats. Apart from that, ECDC should indeed consolidate.
45. One member proposed that the Management Board needed to define the criteria under which ECDC could become active when facing a new public health threat.
46. The Vice Chair pointed out that according to the ECORYS report (annex, p. 143), more than 80% of all respondents were in favour of adding new activities to ECDC's scope. Similar questions (p. 139) showed also an overwhelming majority for extending the mandate. This seemed to contradict the opinion so far expressed by a majority of members.
47. The Chair then asked all members for a brief statement on a potential extension of ECDC's remit. The consensus expressed by all members was that ECDC should concentrate on its core tasks but also include new and emerging diseases.
48. A geographical extension was not ruled out, but it was made clear that a geographical expansion implied structural changes, which would require more staff. One member proposed the expansion into a new geographical area, namely the North African region, while another member cautioned that geographical expansion needed to be discussed.
49. The representative from the European Parliament expressed that new threats would automatically be included. He also welcomed the fact that genetics were included in the report.
50. The Chair then opened the floor for opinions on 'Structure, management and working practices', as mentioned on slides 25 and 26 of the ECORYS presentation. In response to the Chair's request, one member pointed out that ECDC had already taken measures in regard to the ECORYS' recommendations on working practices.
51. A general discussion on all issues mentioned in the ECORYS presentation followed. Several members expressed doubts toward the ECORYS findings. One member thought that ECORYS' criticism of the selection process for members of ECDC's bodies ('not transparent enough'; Q10) was unfounded. The term 'well-balanced input' (Q10) was criticised for

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being too vague. The entire set of conclusions (Q10, Conclusions X) was 'hard to follow', stated another member, and issues like the establishment of performance indicators for the Management Board were not mentioned. One member called all conclusions based on Q10 'disappointing' and 'missing the actual facts by a mile'. Other important points were missing from the report, e.g. ad hoc solutions like working groups. The member then suggested a discussion on factors that were actually relevant for the Boards' work.

52. The ECDC Director replied that the Management Board was primarily a strategic body, while the Advisory Forum's task was to advise on the work programme and scientific excellence. As to ECORYS' recommendations, she mentioned that ECDC had a strategic work plan in place, was in the process of developing a management information system, and had come up with output indicators — not merely performance indicators. ECDC would start reporting on these 20-odd indicators in March 2009. The Director also made clear that full delegation to the Heads of Unit is in place for their relevant part in the ECDC work programme as well as budget responsibility; unfortunately, ECDC had failed to communicate this properly to the ECORYS team. Another area that had already seen improvements was the interaction between Units and Programmes. New procedures have been put in place.

53. The Chair asked the Management Board to indicate their preferences for the final recommendations.

54. The representative of the European Parliament proposed that three questions should be addressed in the paper with the Management Board's final recommendations, in relation to what is stated in ECDC's Founding Regulation: 'Shall we change the structure, shall we change the work process, shall we change the scope?' The size of the document should not exceed two pages for each question. One member recommended adding a preface that underlined ECDC achievements.

55. The Chair suggested that ECDC should develop a document that could serve as a basis for the drafting group's final version. This suggestion was rejected by one member, and the topic was adjourned.

56. After this agenda item on the external evaluation, the Swedish member of the Board, Dr Irène Nilsson-Carlsson, presented a brief update on issues related to the Seat Agreement. It was informed that the Management Board had received a letter from the Swedish Ministry of Finance, confirming that there would be new legislation in place in 2009 that would significantly improve everyday life for ECDC staff. Access to low-cost health care had been available since 1 January 2008, and the usability of the staffs' Swedish coordination numbers had been improved by the Swedish authorities.

### **Item 3: Final accounts 2007** (*document MB13/5*)

57. Theodoros Orfanos, ECDC's accountant, presented the final accounts 2007. The accountant had presented the draft accounts at the Board meeting in March and further informed the Audit Committee on June 16. Following the discussion, the Audit Committee had recommended to the Board that the

attached draft opinion of the MB should be approved — conditional on the fact that the Court of Auditors express a reasonable assurance on the accounts 2007 and that the final version of the report of the Court of Auditors includes the same observations as in the submitted draft.

58. The representative of the Commission, Mr John Ryan, sought clarification on two issues on the Accounts, one from the Balance Sheet (p. 3), one from the Economic Result (p. 4). The accountant explained the reasons of the increased cash deposits at the end of the year and clarified on the meaning of the Economic Result for the year according to accrual accounting principles.

59. The Chair then asked the Board if it approved the draft text of the opinion of the MB on ECDC's final accounts 2007. The Board unanimously approved this document.

### **Item 7: Audit issues**

60. Jef Maes, Head of ECDC's Administrative Unit, reported on the 9th meeting of the Audit Committee (16 June 2008). During the meeting, one major topic was the review of the treasury function. The Internal Auditor presented a final report on this topic. One of the issues raised was the responsibility of the accountant and changes were proposed. Also, the mandate and role of the Audit Committee was discussed. In response to a question from John Ryan (EC), Mr Maes said that there had indeed been an audit on quality management and that a draft report was already available.

### **Item 4: Supplementary and amending budget 2008** (*document MB13/6*)

61. Mr Maes (ECDC) reported a final contribution from the EEA/EFTA member states of €944 000, 144 000 more than originally anticipated. In addition, the Commission notified that the cancelled funds from the 2006 budget — amounting to €396 000 — were available for the Centre in the form of assigned revenue.

62. He therefore proposed to reinforce three budget lines: interim assistance (€106 000), development of ICT applications (€246 000), and surveillance activities (€188 000).

63. Asked to provide additional information on the use of the additional funds, Mr Maes explained that developing the new staff management system, the new inventory management system, and the new leave-management SAP system had been very capital- and time-intensive. But all these expenditures, Mr Maes assured, were initial deployment costs, and the Board could rest assured that the actual operational costs would be substantially lower.

64. When a member expressed his surprise that extra funds were needed to cover staffing needs, Mr. Maes explained that the development of an intranet required additional consultants; also, some of the money would be used to hedge ECDC from higher-than-anticipated staffing costs.

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65. Andrea Ammon, Head of ECDC's Surveillance Unit, said that some of her unit's activities that had been on hold, could now be carried out thanks to the additional funds, namely meetings to prepare chlamydia surveillance, overlap/integration of AMR/HCAI surveillance, work on surveillance in a pandemic, and a tender to map quality assurance measures for surveillance data that Member States have currently in place.

66. Directly after these explanations, the Management Board approved the amended budget and the allocation proposal.

### **Item 12: Update on ECDC budget and staffing** (*document MB13/10*)

67. The Chair and the Director informed the Management Board about uncertainties in the 2009 budget that made planning difficult. ECDC's original assumption was that its gradual growth in budget and staffing would be in line with the Financial Perspective 2007–2013. The draft proposal had called for €50m and 170 staff in 2009. Commission services had a dissenting view: the draft now calls for €8.1m in reserve and a staffing freeze.

68. John Ryan, the representative for the Commission, confirmed that ECDC's description accurately reflected the situation. He mentioned that the positive results of the external evaluation would feed positively into further budget deliberations. According to Mr Ryan, ECDC had received a 'clean bill of health', which would also look good at the interagency evaluation. The ECORYS report could be used as a lever to lift the restrictions. If the final ECORYS report could be released fairly quickly, ECDC would have a good chance to receive the funds. Mr Ryan promised to forward to Brussels the arguments given by the Board.

69. The Director pointed out that ECDC needed another two years to establish ECDC as a full-fledged public health agency. Without the full initial budget, this task could not be finished. To support ECDC in the lifting of these restrictions, it was proposed to send letters to the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee, to DG BUDGET, and to Commissioner Vassiliou.

70. Many members expressed their concern over the budget reserve and staffing freeze and shared the Director's concern over affecting ECDC's development. One member found it particularly disturbing that the ECDC budget issue seemed to be tied to the interagency evaluation, a process that would not be finished before the end of 2009/early 2010.

71. The EC representative, John Ryan, offered to forward to ECDC the EC recommendation on interagency evaluation, in different language versions, so this can be circulated to the members of the Board.

72. Most members supported the letter proposal — particularly if such a letter would highlight the added value of ECDC —, but also pointed out that if the funds in reserve were not released, the budget needed to be re-prioritised. The Chair indicated that copies of these letters could be circulated to the MB

members so they could raise awareness in their countries on this situation and seek support.

73. The Director pointed out that the issue at stake was not a traditional budget cut but a freeze connected to a few issues that the Commission would like to see resolved; e.g. outcome of the external evaluation to see if ECDC brings added value, a new Communication with a financial fiche.

74. After a short break, the Chair reported on Germany's proposal for a statement of the MB protesting against the financial restrictions imposed on ECDC. The resolution read: *"The Management Board strongly opposes both the reserve on the budget and the freeze on the establishment plan, as this would severely impede ECDC's mission to protect the health of the European citizens. As ECDC is still a relatively new and growing agency, working to establish its final structure, any kind of budgetary restriction would be extremely harmful. In light of the recently released final draft report of the external evaluation, which gave ECDC a clean bill of health, any budget restrictions are clearly unjustified and counterproductive."* The Management Board passed this resolution. The representatives for the Commission abstained from this vote.

75. After the discussion of this agenda item, the Chair announced an additional Management Board meeting for September 2008, to be held in Stockholm. Initially, the date proposed was 24 September, but some members indicated they would not be able to participate on that date. A meeting of the Drafting Group on the External Evaluation would also take place in Stockholm. Exact proposals as to time and date would be extended by ECDC.

### **Item 5: ECDC's Multiannual Staff Policy Plan 2009–2011**

*(document MB13/7)*

76. Jef Maes, Head of ECDC's Administrative Unit, then reported on the Multiannual Staff Policy Plan (MSPP) 2009–2011. When this plan was initially presented at the Management Board meeting in March, the Board requested to take into consideration the comments made by Commission services and to provide more detailed information in some areas. The revised version now includes a number of changes, e.g. the policy section now describes the rationale behind the establishment table 2009. For 2009, ECDC expects an additional 40 temporary and 20 contract agents — a number in line with the Financial Perspectives agreement. As before, the revised MSPP follows the common structure for agencies, and the same basic principles are adhered to as in the previous policy plan.

77. One representative expressed his doubts whether a vote should be taken. With the freeze of the establishment plan, the MSPP might be obsolete the moment it was voted on. He also expressed strong reservations on the establishment of an ECDC Liaison Office in Brussels, planned for 2010. This issue, he argued, should be discussed separately.

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78. In response to a remark from a representative for the Commission, requesting more information on the exemptions cited in page 11, point 1.2.3. of the document, Mr Maes replied that ECDC recruits primarily on entry grades, but exemptions could be made for hard-to-fill vacancies, senior staff or certain ICT posts.

79. Mr Maes also explained that the MSPP only laid out some basic principles. But the MSPP was conditional on passing the budget, and it would be very difficult to get the budget approved without having the MSSP in place.

80. The Chair then put the MSSP to a vote — with the section of the planned ECDC Liaison Office in Brussels stricken from the text.

81. The representatives for the Commission abstained from the vote on the MSSP. The Management Board approved the MSSP by a majority show of hands.

**Item 8: ECDC 2009 Work Programme priorities** (*document MB13/8*)

82. The Director informed the Board about the 2009 Work Programme. Between June and October, detailed planning — including consultations with the Commission and the Competent Bodies — for the 2009 programme would take place internally. The final work plan would then be presented to the Management Board at the November meeting. Some abbreviations contained in the document were clarified during the presentation and a footnote needs to be added to clarify these.

83. With a budget crisis looming in the background, planning was difficult, the Director said. Therefore, ECDC had developed two scenarios to deal with the situation. Scenario one listed all deliverables based on a 2008 level of funding, while Scenario two gave deliverables based on the expected 2009 level of funding. The Director then called on ECDC's heads of units to explain what consequences a budget reserve would have on their work programs. All unit heads gave detailed accounts of the changes to their work plans that would be necessary if the budget should be cut.

84. After the presentation of the ECDC unit heads, one member expressed his concern that delivering such precise dual scenarios could be potentially dangerous as it involuntarily provided arguments for final budget cuts. Other members shared this concern and pointed out that all activities in the work plan needed to be well justified to make ECDC less vulnerable and to make sure that core activities could not easily be removed from the plan.

85. One member recommended a strategic decision about the work plan. If the budget reserve was to be upheld, ECDC was well advised to not cut each unit's budget equally. Instead, cuts should be made according to importance. TB and AMR/HCAI were singled out by another member, who called these areas 'extremely important but also extremely endangered without proper funding.'

86. The representative for France asked whether comments should be sent in writing to ECDC, and if so to whom they should be sent.

87. The Director pointed out that she was still optimistic to receive the full budget. A strategic discussion could be done internally if the budget cuts were to become reality. She agreed that disease-specific programmes were of the utmost importance, particularly in respect to ECDC's mission to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases.

### **Item 13: Other matters**

88. The Chair and the Director asked the Board whether it supported the current practice of holding two meetings in Stockholm and one in a Member State outside of Sweden. Since such a third meeting was optional — the Founding Regulation stipulates only two meetings —, it could be more informal and be held in English and without simultaneous interpretation. It was also informed that Poland had already submitted an official invitation to ECDC to host the 2009 June meeting in this country, and that another invitation was in the pipeline, from Ireland.

89. Overall, the members were in favour of continuing with the current practice. Reducing the number of meetings would not be productive, one member said, as ECDC would have to wait even longer for Board decisions. Having meetings in other Member States raised the visibility of ECDC, added another member. Also, the distinction 'formal/informal' was not really helpful, as all meetings, regardless of location, were full meetings covering major administrative issues.

90. The Director stated that there was a clear consensus to hold three meetings per year. On the issue of proposed dates for 2009 meetings, she noted that Cyprus would not be able to attend a meeting on 25 March 2009, and France could not attend on 11 November 2008/09, and therefore ECDC would circulate a new proposal with different dates.

91. As to the renewal of the Management Board, she mentioned that letters had been sent to all EU representations in Brussels. So far, only the United Kingdom had replied. ECDC requested that all nominations for the new Management Board should be submitted as soon as possible to ensure that the new MB can meet in November for the first time, with full membership.

92. The Chair thanked all participants for the productive meeting. He thanked the Finish representative for his government's generosity and hospitality by hosting this MB meeting in Finland.