



Insight ^{no} 7

JANUARY-MARCH 2009

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Left to right: Nobel Laureate in Medicine Prof. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, ECDC Director Zsuzsanna Jakab, Nobel Laureate in Medicine Prof. Luc Montagnier, Vice-Chancellor of Karolinska Institute Prof. Harriet Wallberg-Henriksson, His Excellency Joël De Zorzi, Ambassador of France in Sweden

ECDC, Karolinska Institute and Nobel Prize winners debate on HIV/AIDS prevention

On 8 December 2008, ECDC hosted a scientific seminar with Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Professor Luc Montagnier, joint winners of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine for their role in discovering the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Barré-Sinoussi and Montagnier's work contributed significantly to the current understanding of HIV/AIDS, opening the way for the diagnosis of HIV infection and screening of blood products. The knowledge that AIDS is caused by HIV led to the development of antiretroviral treatments, which have extended the lives of millions of HIV-infected people worldwide.

Despite this, more than two decades after the virus was discovered, HIV/AIDS remains one of the

world's most difficult public health challenges. UNAIDS estimates that there are 33 million people living with HIV worldwide, and a joint report published in December 2008 by ECDC and WHO EURO shows evidence of increasing transmission in several European countries.

Senior experts from ECDC and Stockholm's Karolinska Institute met with the two Nobel laureates to debate the challenges for HIV prevention. The seminar was organised by ECDC in close cooperation with the Embassy of France in Sweden, the Karolinska Institute and the Nobel Foundation.

For more information: www.ecdc.europa.eu

Dr Hubert Hrabcik shares his vision for ECDC



Chief Medical Officer of Austria Dr Hubert Hrabcik

Dr Hubert Hrabcik, Chief Medical Officer of Austria, and Professor Jacques Scheres, European Parliament representative, were elected as new Chairman and Vice Chairman of ECDC Management Board last November. Dr Hrabcik kindly agreed to present his vision on ECDC and ECDC's future in an interview to ECDC Insight. This edition also takes the opportunity of this recent election to focus on the functions and missions of the Management Board, the body which makes key strategic decisions for ECDC and approves its work programme.

Read more on page 4

Editorial by Director Zsuzsanna Jakab



An ambitious work programme for 2009

At its last meeting, in November 2008, our Management Board approved the ECDC Work Programme for 2009. All activities planned will contribute to the implementation of the long-term ECDC Multi-annual Strategic Programme 2007–2013.

In 2009, ECDC will continue to reinforce its activities and staff, with additional resources – a budget of €50.7 million, up from €40.1 million in 2008.

ECDC will further consolidate its overall ‘public health functions’ (surveillance, scientific advice, preparedness and response and health communication) in order to be fully operational at the end of the year. At the same time, the seven disease-specific programmes will be reinforced as they should become ECDC main

focus from 2010. Therefore, long-term specific strategies will be developed for each of the disease programmes in 2009.

Partnership with the Member States, the Commission and other external partners will remain as one of the main drivers of all our activities.

A new management information system will help us, from summer 2009, to plan and monitor activities in a more systematic, regular and efficient way.

Although influenza vaccination and healthcare-associated infections will receive a particular emphasis in 2009, it would be too long for me to list all the activities that ECDC will conduct, from surveillance reinforcement to scientific studies, preparedness and training, but the annual work programme is now available on our website.

ECDC Portal: towards launch



In the coming weeks, ECDC will launch a web portal with the aim of providing more information to its e-readers in a better structured way. An improved accessibility to websites recently incorporated or created by ECDC (e.g. EPIET, DSN websites), the opportunity to benefit from a contextual navigation, as well as other features, such as news alert or a new section providing information on countries, data and statistics, will be among the major improvements. At a later stage this year, ECDC intends to separately launch each of the 25 language versions. Extranets (e.g. for the Advisory Forum, Management Board, Competent Bodies) will also be included in the future. The ECDC portal is intended to become the Centre’s main communication tool for the inner circles as well as for the general public.

EXPO 2010 – Shanghai, China



EXPO, the World Fair, will be held in Shanghai, China, from 1 May 2010 to 31 October 2010. World Fairs are showcases of human inspirations and thoughts. They are among the largest events in the world in terms of economic and cultural impact (after the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games) and offer a wonderful opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue. One of the main attractions at World Fairs is the national pavilions, created by participating countries. Nations often compete for the most memorable structure – the Eiffel Tower in Paris (1889) and the Atomium in Brussels (1958) are examples.

The theme of the 2010 exposition will be ‘Better City – Better Life’. The aim is to explore the full potential of urban life in the 21st century as 55% of the world population will live in cities by 2010.

The EXPO 2010 will be a significant international gathering. Seventy million visitors from 200 nations are expected to attend, which will be the largest number of visitors in the history of the World Fairs. For the first time, the Shanghai EXPO 2010 will feature a highly sophisticated online version.

In the content of the Memorandum of Understanding between ECDC and China CDC, excellent relations have been developed between both organisations. These contacts, like all ECDC external relations, are aimed at further strengthening Europe’s defences against communicable diseases. The contact with China CDC worked well during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and will be further developed for the EXPO 2010. There have been mutual visits of delegations. The areas of co-operation are:

- the establishment of communication channels between Shanghai and Stockholm for the duration of EXPO 2010;
- the further development of preparedness and response systems to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation;
- reciprocal visits to assist preparations; and
- exchange of information on epidemiological training relevant to mass gatherings.



ECDC staff retreat: conviviality and brainstorming

In such a fast-growing organisation like ECDC keeping unity, team spirit and values, and setting clear objectives for the year to come, while welcoming dozen of new colleagues from all over Europe every month, constitute a real challenge. To build up the links and plan the future, the 200 ECDC staff members went on a retreat held in a small town close to Stockholm on 5–6 February. It was a unique occasion to exchange ideas about what has been achieved and what needs to be accomplished in

2009 and beyond, with brainstorming discussions on how to address this year's objectives and challenges for ECDC. The ECDC Director contributed with a very personal keynote presentation on the Centre's outstanding development. Dick Thomson, a former Director of communication at WHO, closed the session by sharing his personal experience on outbreak communication.

Finally, it is in sight: the Intranet!

After eight months of intensive planning, an Intranet for ECDC's staff is ready to go live — in spring 2009. At first it will contain a basic set of features, but development will be ongoing and by the end of the year we will have a more complete Intranet at our service. The Intranet will connect you to various systems in ECDC (CRM, CMT, EPIS, KIS, MIS, SAP, TESSy and TTT*) and will provide you with services such as interactive calendars, room bookings, HR information, internal phone directories,

policy and procedure manuals, and the latest news on ECDC. It will also offer employee self-service like classified ads, workspaces and user profiles. It will ensure more efficiency, flexibility, productivity, connectivity to people and availability of material and timely information.

*all acronyms used in ECDC will be explained on the Intranet!

First ECDC technical consultation meeting on outbreak communication training



Providing specialist training on outbreak communication to officials from the Competent Bodies (CB) was identified as one of the top priorities at the first meeting with Heads of Communication of the CB held at ECDC in April 2008. In response to this, on 15–16 December 2008 ECDC held a technical consultation aimed at assessing, with the input from country representatives, the training needs as well as identifying the areas where ECDC could add value. The outcomes of this meeting will be the basis for recommendations on the format and objectives of the courses, as well as a possible curricula that would be of benefit for Member States' officials. Lessons learned in 2008, and the identification of future opportunities for generic preparedness.

European journalists participate in press trip to IMED



Emerging infectious diseases are at the centre of the world's attention and the media will be frontline actors in the dissemination of information should a pandemic influenza or a bioterrorism attack occurs. In order to brief European journalists on the current challenges posed by emerging infectious diseases, ECDC arranged a press trip to the second International Meeting on Emerging Diseases and Surveillance (IMED 2009, Vienna, 13–16 February) together with the conference organiser ProMED/ISID. Fifteen journalists from 12 European countries took part in the press trip and participated in the IMED conference to acquire more information on the most important disease threats and ways to detect and address them.



Management Board meeting, December 2007

ECDC Management Board

Last November, Dr Hubert Hrabcik, Chief Medical Officer of Austria, was elected Chair of ECDC Management Board (replacing Dr Marc Sprenger, Netherlands) and Professor Jacques Scheres, European Parliament representative, was chosen as Deputy Chair (replacing Professor Meni Malliori, European Parliament representative). Dr Hrabcik was elected by his peers for a two-year term, which may be extended. The new Chair will have the opportunity to focus on inputs that are decisive for ECDC's efficient functioning as an independent agency of the EU.

The ECDC Director reports to a Management Board whose members are nominated by the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission. The members of the Board are appointed in such a way as to secure

the highest standards of competence and a broad range of relevant expertise. Alternates who represent the member in his/her absence are appointed by the same procedure. Members' terms of office is four years and may be extended. Although the Management Board is bound to meet at least twice a year at the invitation of the Chair – or at the request of at least one third of its members –, in practice it meets three times a year (twice in Stockholm and once in a Member State). The ECDC Director takes part in these meetings, without voting rights, and provides the secretariat.

The Management Board's remit is broad and impacts all areas of ECDC's work. Of note, the Board appoints or dismisses the Director and exercises disciplinary authority over him/her. It ensures that the Centre carries out its

mission and performs the tasks assigned to it, ordering independent and external evaluations every five years. It approves and monitors implementation of ECDC's work programme and budget and it adopts the annual report and accounts. It ensures that these programmes are consistent with the EU's legislative and policy priorities in the area of its mission. It adopts the financial rules applicable to the Centre in agreement with the Commission.

Since ECDC was established in 2005, the Management Board has played a decisive role in building up the Centre. The Board continues to offer highly valued advice. ECDC would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the Management Board for their solid dedication in carrying out their mandate.

Dr Hubert Hrabcik shares his vision for ECDC



Dr Hubert Hrabcik was recently appointed Chair of ECDC's Management Board. He replaces Dr Marc Sprenger and has kindly accepted to share his views about the Centre with ECDC Insight.

Insight – How do you see ECDC today?

Dr Hrabcik – Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the positive decision of ECDC's Management Board for having appointed me as the new Chair. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues for this momentous nomination.

Based on the work achieved by the Management Board to date, I firmly believe that we have concluded the first period of consolidation for ECDC, in which we were mainly focusing

on securing funding and building up the organisation. ECDC now needs to move forward in a comprehensive way in order to engage decisively in the fight against health threats in Europe and to become a fully fledged agency for the benefit of Member States.

Insight – What is your vision for ECDC in the coming years?

Dr Hrabcik – I envision ECDC as a 'Centre of Excellence' and also a guiding source for the scientific community. It is not very often that an agency evolves with such positive, constructive results within the course of merely a few years as ECDC has achieved it. Without a doubt, ECDC has the potential to become the heart of the health network in Europe.



From left to right: Csaba Ködmön, Vahur Hollo, Amanda Ozin-Hofsaess, Davide Manissero, Heidi Jung, Francisco Santos, Ines Steffens, Vladimir Prikazsky

ECDC TB team: a major actor in the fight against TB

On 24 March 2009 the ECDC Tuberculosis (TB) team will mark World TB Day with the launch of the first joint ECDC / WHO TB surveillance report. Held in Bucharest, this event is significant with regards to ECDC's growing involvement in the fight against TB in the EU.

Although the EU is characterised by a low TB incidence overall (17.8/100 000) with a downwards trend over the past five years, a number of significant issues make clear that TB remains a challenge in modern times. In 2007 almost 85 000 cases were notified. The range in notification rates is still wide throughout the EU, from 4 to over 100 cases per 100 000 populations. Beyond this average representation, three specific threats need to be considered when evaluating the TB situation in the EU: the vulnerability of certain at risk populations, the drug resistance (MDR TB/XDR TB) and the treatment outcomes.

Formed in September 2006 and coordinated by Davide Manissero since March 2007, the ECDC TB team is composed of eight dedicated scientists from all ECDC technical units (see picture). The blue print that underlies their actions as well as their main achievement so far is the ECDC's Framework action plan to fight TB in the EU published on the occasion of World TB Day 2008. This action plan, requested by the then EU Commissioner Kyprianou, provides a roadmap to control, and ultimately eliminate, TB in the EU. The plan identifies four key principles for action:

- 1) strengthening health systems;
- 2) ensuring prompt and quality TB care for all;
- 3) developing and assessing new tools;
- 4) building partnerships and international collaboration.

Following the successful release of the plan, the team is now focusing on its implementation. The follow-up to the ECDC plan is foreseen in the form of a comprehensive implementation strategy produced through a consultative process, which will identify and define control and epidemiological settings. It includes the development of indicators and the definition of epidemiological targets for the elimination of TB, as well as the definition of areas of work and responsibilities.

Based on the abovementioned identified areas of action, the team already delivered or is currently working on a number of products that aim at contributing to support Member States in their progress towards elimination of TB in Europe. In the surveillance field, the team will launch on World TB Day 2009 a joint ECDC/WHO report on the TB surveillance in Europe. It comes as a consequence of the integration of the activities previously led by the EURO TB network into ECDC in January 2008. The team also actively focuses on the recently launched MDR TB molecular surveillance project. With regards to its contribution to the development of scientific advice, the team is currently finalising an evidence-package for TB control among migrants in the EU to be launched in the summer of this year. The team also developed a model to support BCG decision making at country level. In 2009 ECDC will launch an EU TB laboratory-reference network, underlining the importance of the cooperation at EU level.

In 2009 the Programme will focus on a number of TB country visits, based on the model of the successful visit carried out – jointly with WHO EURO – to Bulgaria in 2008.

Over the years, the team has developed a fruitful collaboration with colleagues from the Member States, the Commission, WHO

and international NGOs in the field of TB control. As a result, the team served on several technical panels of WHO and the Stop TB partnership. TB is indeed a global issue and the ECDC TB team is fully aware of the necessity to unite all efforts in order to progress towards the elimination of the disease in the EU and to meet the challenge of a concerted action in neighbouring and high burden countries beyond the EU.

Highlights of the TB team's work

- March 2007: First ECDC scientific seminar on TB in the European Parliament on World TB day
- October 2007: 'All against Tuberculosis' WHO European Region Ministerial Forum and launch of the Berlin Declaration
- January 2008 : Coordination of the Euro TB network transferred to ECDC and joint WHO EURO/ECDC surveillance for TB in place
- February 2008: Publication of the Framework Action Plan to fight Tuberculosis in the European Union
- November 2008: ECDC/WHO Joint Surveillance Network Advising Group meeting

Soon available:

- Joint ECDC / WHO report on the TB surveillance in Europe
- Video clip on MDR-TB

All reports can be downloaded from the publication page of the ECDC website



From left to right: Arnold Bosman, Viviane Bremer, Claudia Metz-Ruffer, Carmen Yarela Santos, Vladimir Prikazsky, Rosine Fall. Absent from the picture: Anna Bohlin

Training: a key priority for ECDC

Identifying training needs

ECDC's primary objective is to meet Member States' needs. Training strategies are therefore elaborated in close collaboration with colleagues at national level. After three consultations held in 2005, 2007 and 2008, a new consultation to be scheduled in 2009 will be the occasion to refine the approach and monitor progress. The development of capacities in the EU also depends on the availability of training resources. These have now been inventoried, through country visits organised by ECDC upon request, and using a standardised approach. After having visited Poland, Hungary and Latvia in 2007 and Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia and Romania in 2008, ECDC plans to hold a structured survey for training needs among all EU Member States and will visit countries upon request to discuss specific training needs. In addition, ECDC published in January 2008 a list of core competencies for public health epidemiologists working in communicable disease surveillance and response. This list, available on ECDC website, is intended as a reference for employers in career development processes and for trainers in curriculum design.

Responding to training needs in 2009

In 2008 ECDC launched a call for setting up a new tool that illustrates its deep involvement in training: the Field epidemiology manual (FEM). The wiki platform is in construction at present. EPIET (see below) has developed a set of chapters from scientific lectures that

will become the core of the FEM. They will be a source of core knowledge for starting field work and reflecting the core competencies of intervention epidemiologists. That core is intended to be gradually amended by articles and other training material and translated into languages by native-speaking epidemiologists. This service is going to complement the more traditional approach on training that ECDC has been implementing since its creation in 2005. Since 2006, 423 experts from all EU and EEA/EFTA countries have been trained on technical aspects of outbreak investigation, managerial skills in outbreak investigations, epidemiological aspects of vaccines, time series analysis, and microbiological and epidemiological aspects of outbreak investigation through a series of short courses organised by ECDC. In 2009 ECDC will further explore the training of trainers approach. In November 2008, at ESCAIDE, ECDC organised four workshops exclusively for trainers. The success of this initiative convinced ECDC to schedule further training activities in 2009.

The European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET)

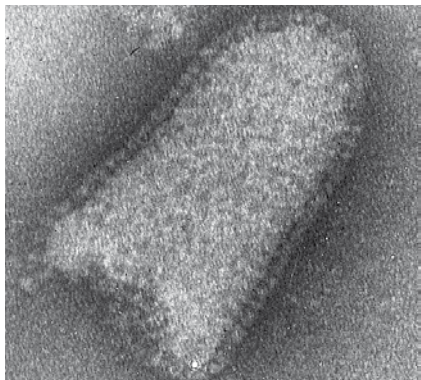
EPIET is a two-year fellowship programme which provides training and practical experience in intervention epidemiology. It is aimed at EU medical practitioners, public-health nurses, microbiologists, veterinarians and other health professionals. ECDC has started the selection of the 19 new fellows of cohort 15, who will join the 149 fellows trained since the start of the programme. In addition,

The Centre shall, as appropriate, support and coordinate training programmes in order to assist Member States and the Commission to have sufficient numbers of trained specialists, in particular in epidemiological surveillance and field investigation, and to have the capability to define health measures to control disease outbreaks.

ECDC Founding Regulation, article 9

ECDC will select two fellows for the new training in public health microbiology. This October, cohort 15 will start their training with a three-week introductory course in Spain. This course will also be open to experts in Member States. While ECDC is recruiting cohort 15, cohort 13 and 14 are currently going through the two-year training process. During spring 2009, they will attend the modules on 'laboratory methods for epidemiologists', 'communication and scientific writing', 'vaccinology' and 'rapid assessment in complex emergency situations' organised by ECDC and Member States. ECDC is very proud to have hosted and actively acted to further develop the programme since November 2007.

Expert meeting on rabies post-exposure prophylaxis



A shortage of immunoglobulin and vaccine against rabies has been reported by several countries worldwide. According to some estimates, this situation might continue until the end of 2009.

In order to review the current strategies for post-exposure prophylaxis, ECDC held a multidisciplinary consultation of rabies experts. On 15 January 2009, European and international experts in public health, clinical treatment, microbiology, and epidemiology; immunoglobulin and vaccine manufacturers; and representatives of the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and WHO gathered at ECDC.

A key outcome was further clarifications of criteria for using post-exposure prophylaxis.

EFSA-ECDC report on trends and sources of zoonoses in the EU

On 20 January 2009 ECDC and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published their *Community Zoonoses Report for 2007*, which analyses the occurrence of infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. The report shows that although figures varied considerably between Member States, *Campylobacter* infections still topped the list of zoonotic diseases in the EU and that the number of cases due to *Salmonella* infections in humans fell for the fourth year in a row. Cases of *Listeria* remained at the same level.

Read more: www.ecdc.europa.eu

Happy birthday, TESSy!



Andrea Ammon



Edward Van Straten (left)



Tina Purnat

The European Surveillance System (TESSy) had its first birthday on 29 January 2009! TESSy was developed in 2007 by ECDC with the aim to collect, store and disseminate surveillance data of EU Member States and EEA/EFTA countries. Over the past year, 115 users have reported 1 874 files containing 1.9 million records, of which 1.5 million were counted (the rest were updated and deleted records).

This has resulted in 6 million validation messages after validation of 45 million (!) variable values. And this is only the beginning... Proud parents, the TESSy team is well aware that nothing could have been achieved without the patience, support and good will of all colleagues in the Member States. ECDC would like to join them in warmly thanking all colleagues who contributed to this success.

ECDC pushes on its work on behavioural surveillance



Family picture, Montreux, February 2009

Behavioural surveillance related to HIV and STI in Europe is at the heart of an ambitious project that ECDC has conferred to the Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine, Lausanne (Switzerland). This project aims at mapping behavioural surveillance and surveys in Member States as well as developing

a proposal for a set of key indicators and technical 'toolkit' providing methodological guidance on how surveillance may be conducted in general and in specific populations. The final report will be used as a basis for further ECDC activities in this area. The first expert meeting took place on 12–13 February in Montreux.

ECDC Library strengthens its functions



Since its creation two years ago, the ECDC Library has been strengthening the functionality of its information services. The Library contributes to ECDC by providing information on public health, infectious diseases and the EU, and supports in-house projects with a wide range of services.

The Library collection and services are available through the Intranet as well as in situ (new building, room N203), where ECDC experts can receive advice from their librarian and work in a different setting.

During 2008, the Library was integrated into ECDC's public health event operation plan to provide support in the control of the event. Furthermore it developed a scientific study for looking into ways to enhance the *Eurosurveillance* quality and participated in the annual Meeting of *Eurosurveillance* Editorial Board and Associated Editors presenting the results of this study. The Library is affiliated to EAHIL (European Association for Health Information and Libraries) and EUROLIB (group of European institutional libraries).

New publications

Workshop on linking environmental and infectious diseases

The objective of this workshop was to explore the possibilities for the establishment of a European Environment and Epidemiology (E3) Network. This network could integrate environmental and epidemiological data, generating essential information for public health. The workshop brought together a wide range of experts on infectious diseases, climate change, monitoring and evaluation, and computer modelling. In connection with the plans for the E3 Network, workshop participants proposed the creation of two projects: a pilot study on tick-borne encephalitis, which will provide a model for trend analysis and the impact of interventions; and a pilot on waterborne diseases, which will serve as a model for an early warning system. The workshop took place on 28–29 May 2008 in Sigtuna, Sweden.

Meeting report: Expert meeting on chikungunya modelling

This April 2008 meeting brought together modellers, entomologists and public health officials from several European countries. During the discussions, it became apparent that chikungunya outbreaks can be modelled either by using an epidemic model integrated in the calculations, or by analysing raw data.

Additional model development is needed to include the effects of imposed interventions in the models and to assess how interventions are related to the size of the mosquito population.

Data related to the vector are still sparse. Some models have entirely bypassed the vector and estimated seasonality from an epidemic curve, or have included an estimated seasonal vector density. In order to provide more precise calculation results, the size of the vector population needs to be determined and human cases have to be included.

Meeting report: Consultation of the ECDC Competent Bodies for Preparedness and Response

The Competent Bodies (CBs) are ECDC's primary points of contact when looking for scientific expertise in the Member States. During the October 2008 meeting of ECDC's CBs for Preparedness, the discussion mainly focused on ECDC's role in generic preparedness. While the Health Security Committee addresses generic preparedness in the EU, ECDC has an important role in providing technical support to the work of the Health Security Committee and supporting Member States with specific elements of generic preparedness plans.

In a separate session, the CBs for Response reviewed the latest version of a document on 'Guiding principles for response'. They also discussed some of ECDC's response activities, e.g. EU-level threat assessments following EWRS event notifications.

For more information: publications@ecdc.europa.eu

ISSN 1830-7965



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Upcoming events:

04–05.03.2009

Workshop on vulnerabilities and inequalities in infectious diseases in Europe, Sofia

05.03.2009

Influenza steering committee meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

17–18.03.2009

Annual meeting of the European Invasive Bacterial Infections surveillance network, Stockholm, ECDC

25–26.03.2009

Management Board meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

14–16.04.2009

National AMR Focal Point meeting, Prague

21–22.04.2009

West Nile Expert consultation, Stockholm, ECDC

22–23.04.2009

Annual Meeting of Travel Medicine Network, Stockholm, ECDC

5–6.05.2009

ECDC National Microbiology Focal Points meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

12–13.05.2009

Advisory Forum meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

15.05.2009

Annual meeting of the European network of Diagnostics for imported viral diseases (ENIVD), Prague

2–4.06.2009

Annual Influenza contact point meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

08–12.12.2008

Outbreak Preparedness & Support Section Competent Bodies Meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

10–11.06.2009

ECDC National Microbiology Focal Points meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

24–25. 06.2009

Management Board meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

22–23. 09.2009

Advisory Forum meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

5–6.11.2008

Management Board meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

18.11.2009

2nd European Antibiotic Awareness Day, Across Europe

24–25.11.2009

Influenza working group, Stockholm, ECDC

8–9.12.2009

Advisory Forum meeting, Stockholm, ECDC

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