

Preparatory measures for the participation of the Western Balkans and Türkiye in ECDC activities, with a special focus on One Health responses against antimicrobial resistance and severe acute respiratory infection surveillance

2020–2024

Project background and description

Collaboration with countries that have applied to join the EU has been one of ECDC's strategic priorities since the early years of its establishment, and is endorsed in the [ECDC Strategy 2021–2027](#). It is the [sixth ECDC project](#) with external financial assistance by DG NEAR under the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) aimed to prepare the national authorities of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for their future participation in ECDC activities. The beneficiaries of this ECDC-IPA6 project benefit from a European perspective that was granted to them by the European Parliament and the Council, i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Türkiye (IPA beneficiaries).

Project scope

The project's scope is to contribute to increased health security in the EU through international collaboration and alignment regarding infectious disease policies and practice. Within the action area on strengthened cooperation and coordination between ECDC and partners in the EU neighbourhood, ECDC supports Western Balkans countries and Türkiye to strengthen their infectious disease prevention and control systems and public health workforce.

Project aim

The aim of the project is to support national counterparts in IPA beneficiaries in their preparation for full participation in ECDC's technical activities and to enhance IPA beneficiaries' capacities to advance One Health responses against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and enhanced severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) surveillance.

Work plan 2023

Work Stream 1. 'Preparatory measures for participation of IPA beneficiaries' authorities in ECDC activities and systems' aims to further support national counterparts in the IPA beneficiaries in their preparation for full participation in ECDC's work'



¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Following discussions in the Annual Meeting of National ECDC Correspondents in November 2022, countries will continue reporting data to ECDC on agreed diseases and gradually expand the scope to covering emerging and vector-borne diseases and sharing technical information on potential cross-border threats via EpiPulse.

Data submitted by Western Balkans countries and Türkiye on mutually agreed diseases will be regularly reviewed and discussed with national surveillance contact points in order to increase the level of EU-level data quality in terms of the comparability, timeliness, and reliability of communicable diseases surveillance data. In addition, ECDC will propose to Western Balkans countries and Türkiye that the agency conduct technical country visits to discuss the surveillance of communicable diseases; country visit reports will be delivered that include analysis of strengths and challenges as well as recommendations for further improvement. The dates of such country visits are to be agreed with key counterparts in each beneficiary country.

ECDC will invite relevant experts from IPA beneficiaries to ECDC's disease network meetings, technical discussions, and training workshops. The tentative list of 2023 events is:

Hepatitis B and C network meeting, 14–15 March 2023

Location: In person, Stockholm, SE

Participants: designated hepatitis experts

Workshop on Preparedness and Response to West Nile Virus, 22–24 March 2023

Location: In person, Rome, IT

Participants: designated WNV experts with human and animal/entomological profile

Annual meeting of NFPs for Surveillance, 23–24 May 2023

Location: Hybrid, Stockholm, SE

Participants: Observer NFPs for Surveillance

NPI consultation follow-up, 24–25 May 2023

Location: In person, Stockholm, SE

Participants: designated experts

EVD-LabNet network meeting, 30–31 May 2023

Location: In person, Padova, IT

Participants: EVD-LabNet contact points (microbiology)

Summer School 2023, 30 May–1 June 2023

Location: In person, Stockholm, SE

Participants: designated experts

Joint ECDC/WHO Europe regional influenza and COVID-19 annual meeting, 31 May–2 June 2023

Location: Hybrid, Copenhagen-DK

Participants: Observers NFPs for VRD, lab and epi focal points for flu and COVID-19

STI Network Meeting, 28–29 June 2023

Location: In person, Stockholm, SE

Participants: nominated gonorrhoea experts having access to TESSy GONO data reporting (epidemiology and microbiology profiles)

Tuberculosis Disease Network Meeting, Q2

Location: Virtual

Participants: two nominated TB experts per country

Annual meeting on AMR for FWD network, Q2

Location: Virtual

Participants: designated experts

SoHO network meeting: Tissues and cells and MAR, 5–6 September 2023

Location: Stockholm, SE

Participants: designated experts

Annual Meeting of the FWD Network, 18 September 2023

Location: In person, Helsinki, FI

Participants: nominated FWD experts (EpiPulse-FWD users)

EURGen-Net virtual network meeting, Q3

Location: Virtual

Participants: nominated EURGen-Net contact points

ELDSNet annual meeting, Q3

Location: Virtual

Participants: nominated Legionnaires' disease experts for ELDSNet

HAI-Network meeting, Q3

Location: Virtual

Participants: designated experts in healthcare associated infections

Annual Meeting of NFPs for Preparedness & Response and Threat Detection, 12–13 September 2023

Location: Stockholm, SE

Participants: Observers NFPs for Preparedness and Response

EVD-LabNet training: basic and advanced methods for phylogenetic analysis, phylogeography, and evolution analysis of viral genome, Q3

Location: Virtual

Participants: EVD microbiology contact points, Observer NFPs for EVD

EVD-LabNet training: introduction to virology, diagnostics, and molecular epidemiology, Q3

Location: Virtual

Participants: Observer NFPs for EVD, contact points for EVD epidemiology and microbiology

Annual meeting of NFPs for Threat Detection, EWRS, and IHR, Q3

Location: Hybrid

Participants: Observer NFPs for Threat Detection

ERLTB-Net Annual Meeting and Large Capacity-Building Workshop, October 2023

Location: Madrid, ES

Participants: designated TB laboratory experts

Work Stream 2. Advancement of One Health approaches against AMR

Following ECDC's open call for tenders [OI/2022/DIR/23891- Country Support to Advance One-Health Responses against Antimicrobial Resistance in Western Balkans](#), the consortium of EpiConcept (France) and Integrated Quality Laboratory Services (France) will initiate the implementation of activities aimed to contribute to the advancement of the 'One Health' approach against AMR in the Western Balkans through the: (i) identification of gaps in the current national AMR strategies and action plans; (ii) development of country roadmaps; (iii) support in the development of electronic surveillance of AMR; and (iv) raising awareness initiatives. The gap analysis and country visits to countries that have signed the expression of commitment to implement the activities will be implemented.

Control of Multidrug-resistant Organisms (MDROs) in Healthcare Settings, October 2023

Location: Virtual

Participants: designated experts

EVD LabNet Training, Q4

Location: Virtual

Participants: EVD-LabNet network members (contact points for microbiology)

Annual Meeting of NFPs for Microbiology, Q4

Location: Virtual

Participants: Observer NFPs in Microbiology

Cross-border simulation exercise, Q4

Location: To be confirmed

Participants: designated experts involved in preparedness planning

Annual EVD Network Meeting, Q4

Location: In person, Stockholm, SE

Participants: Observer NFPs for EVD

Annual Meeting of National ECDC Correspondents in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, Q4

Location: Hybrid, Stockholm-SE

Participants: National ECDC Correspondents, Observer NFPs

Winter workshop 2023, Q4

Location: Virtual

Participants: designated experts for capacity-building

Work Stream 3. Enhancing SARI surveillance to support the implementation of fit-for-purpose surveillance systems

The plan for 2023 is to ensure that technical support to national authorities is continued by EpiConcept through continuous services to implement planned surveillance activities and the studies, as well as deliver training and capacity-building workshops. This shall enhance the capacities in the countries to implement the protocols, validate data, and contribute to ECDC's activities as per standards at the level of the EU Member States.