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Date: 14 June 2024

Ms Helen Sõber
Adviser
European Union Affairs and International Co-
operation Department
Ministry of Social Affairs
Suur-Ameerika 1
10122 Tallinn
Estonia

Our reference:	KNA/kha	Your reference:
Notre référence:		Votre référence:
Unser Zeichen:		Ihr Zeichen:
См. наш номер:		На Ваш номер:

Dear Ms Sõber,

Based on a review of the performance of the National Influenza Centre (NIC) in the WHO European Region during the 2022/2023 influenza seasons, I am pleased to inform you that the WHO-recognized NIC in Estonia headed by Ms Johanna Kristina Tamm at the Laboratory for Communicable Diseases, Health Board Health Board meets the criteria and will continue to be recognized by WHO.

National Influenza Centres play a key role in influenza (sentinel) surveillance at the national level and contribute to regional and global surveillance through the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS). The data generated by the NICs are critical to understand the timing and spread of influenza epidemics and the contribution of the different viruses to morbidity and mortality. For the European Region, the data are reported weekly in the *European Respiratory Virus Surveillance Summary (ERVISS)* bulletin jointly produced by WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the laboratories composing the National Influenza Centres are requested to share representative seasonal influenza viruses (either positive samples or influenza virus isolates) by shipping them to a WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza (WHO CC). Characterization of these viruses from the whole GISRS network contribute to the biannual selection of viruses for seasonal influenza vaccines and to the monitoring of susceptibility to antiviral drugs.

In compliance with the Standard Material Transfer Agreement of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework, NICs are also requested to send emerging influenza viruses with pandemic potential as well as clinical specimens and/or viruses that cannot be readily identified with diagnostic reagents provided through the WHO GISRS to a WHO CC or H5 Reference Laboratory of their choice.

In addition, the laboratories composing the NIC should regularly assess their competencies by taking part in the External Quality Assessment Programmes (EQAP), in particular the annual EQAP organised by WHO Global Influenza Programme with the Centre for Health Protection in Hong-Kong SAR, China.

One of the major lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic was that developing and maintaining integrated population-based surveillance systems for influenza, COVID-19 and other respiratory viral infections of public health concern in Europe is an urgent priority. The implementation of the integrated

respiratory surveillance that has already started by many countries of the Region will require further strengthening of the sentinel surveillance systems and NICs as central and critical part of these systems.

We therefore encourage you, as the Ministry of Health, to continue providing full support to the NIC in your country to allow them to fulfil their missions as specified in the WHO NIC ToR as well as in leading national efforts towards integrated surveillance of influenza and other respiratory viruses of public health concern.

WHO, for its part, will continue to support the NIC in your country through provision of technical guidance, training and networking opportunities.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank you for the continued fruitful collaboration.

Sincerely yours,



Dr Gundo Weiler
Director Country Support and Partnerships
Acting Regional Emergency Director

Copy for information to:

Ms Triin Uusberg, Head, European Union Affairs and International Co-operation Department, Ministry of Social Affairs, Suur-Ameerika 1, 10129 Tallinn, Estonia

H.E. Ms Riia Salsa-Audiffren, Ambassador Representative of the Republic of Estonia, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28A, CH-1209 Genève, Switzerland

H.E. Mr William Mart Laanemäe, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Republic of Estonia, Frederiksgade 19, 4th floor, 1265 Copenhagen K, Denmark

Ms Kristina Köhler, Liaison Officer, WHO Country Office, Estonia, Paldiski Road 81, 10617 Tallinn, Estonia

Enclosure

Details of the NIC in your country, status of WHO-recognition and key reference documents

NIC should demonstrate each year that they comply with the WHO NIC terms of reference. Those NIC that did not meet the criteria will have one year for corrective action, which will be supported by WHO where possible.

Thank you for reviewing the NIC details below and to inform us of any changes.

1. NIC details

Laboratory for Communicable Diseases, Health Board Health Board
Paldiski mnt 81 Tallinn 10614 Estonia
Att.: Johanna Kristina Tamm

Status of WHO recognition for 2022-2023 season:

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Maintained: NIC meets the criteria

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Provisionally maintained: NIC failed to meet all the criteria

2. Key reference documents:

1. How to become a WHO-recognized National Influenza Centre: Guidance on the process for influenza laboratories in the WHO European Region [web site]. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, (<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2010-4407-44170-62368>)

2. Terms of Reference for National Influenza Centres [web site]. Geneva, World Health Organization, (https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/influenza/national-influenza-centers-files/nic_tor_en.pdf?sfvrsn=93513e78_30)

3. Pandemic influenza preparedness framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits. Geneva, World Health Organization; 2011, (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240024854>)

4. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Respiratory Virus Surveillance Summary (ERVISS), (<https://erviss.org/>)