Pilot: Epidemic Intelligence Network meetings

Prepared by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control Epidemic Intelligence Group

Background

The proposal for the round table meeting as part of the Epidemic Intelligence Network activities was first discussed during the 2023 annual meeting of the National Focal Points for Threat Detection, EWRS and IHR. Details on the objectives and format were further discussed during the first annual meeting of the Epidemic Intelligence Network in 2024 in Rome.

This proposal is based on the outcomes of the discussion that took place in Rome (see Annex).

Details such as the EU/EEA Member States (MS) participants’ preferred date/time of the meeting will be determined following a short survey.

Pilot: ECDC Epidemic Intelligence Network meetings – Terms

Background

Between 2023 and 2024, a number of Member States requested regular meetings of the Epidemic Intelligence network to discuss ongoing events. At the first Epidemic Intelligence Network meeting in 2024, ECDC was asked to establish these meetings and initial discussions on the scope were held. The overall aim of these meetings is to ensure that all Member States have a common understanding on ongoing events through the sharing of epidemiological information, context, risk assessments and response measures.

The meetings will be a forum for trusted information exchanges and will also be beneficial for ECDC allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of events as well as their relevance from a Member State perspective. In addition, the meetings will also provide an opportunity for sharing updates on tools and processes used in Epidemic Intelligence and event-based surveillance. The meetings will be piloted until the end of the year and then evaluated.

Specific objectives

* Sharing of information on ongoing public health events in the EU/EEA and globally by ECDC, including ECDC assessment and actions
* Exchange of information on public health events by Member States including additional context, assessments and response measures
* Sharing of best practices in Epidemic Intelligence and response to events
* Exchanges on the operational use of tools such as EpiPulse events and EIOS

Participants

* ECDC Epidemic Intelligence Group, EPRS Section
* National Focal Points for Threat Detection, EWRS and IHR and Epidemic Intelligence Operational Contact Points from EU/EEA MS (hereafter Threat detection NFPs/OCPs)
* ECDC subject-matter experts where relevant
* Other ECDC networks where relevant following discussion with ECDC subject-matter experts
* Participation of other stakeholders will be discussed during the piloting

Roles

The ECDC Epidemic Intelligence Group will be responsible to:

* Developing the agenda for each meeting
* Organize the meetings (scheduling and sharing agenda, connection details, sharing of materials)
* Contacting Threat Detection NFPs/OCPs when specific contributions for public health events are needed

ECDC Response duty officer: provide input on the assessments

Threat Detection NFPs/OCPs are expected to:

* Provide feedback on the agenda and propose additional public health events to be discussed
* Liaise and invite subject-matter experts from MS, if needed
* Contribute to the discussion and provide national-level perspectives

ECDC and MS subject-matter experts: provide input on public health events, including the assessment, within their area of expertise

Principles

All information discussed in the meeting is confidential unless stated otherwise. Information may be shared within participating organisations on a need-to-know basis. If information needs to be shared further, permission should be sought from ECDC. ECDC will always check with the original source.

Meetings frequency and duration

Every two weeks for 1 hour.

Standing, generic agenda

* Public health events included in the CDTRs from the previous two weeks.
* Other public health events (under monitoring by ECDC or MS).
* Discussion focusing on the context of public health events, assessments and response and best practices.
* Updates on tools.
* Any other business.

Timeline for meeting preparation

* 2 days before the meeting: ECDC sends the standing agenda to all Threat Detection NFPs/OCPs with a reminder to provide feedback and add public health events or other topics (e.g. for AOB).
* 1 day before the meeting: Agenda resent including additions
* The agenda will be saved in the Epidemic Intelligence Network ECON SharePoint site

Platforms/tools to be used for the meetings and material exchange

* Microsoft Teams for the online meetings
* ECON Epidemic Intelligence Site for material sharing (including agenda)

Outputs

* Notes from the meeting will be shared by close of business (tbc) using the Epidemic Intelligence Network ECON SharePoint site where all NFPs/OCPs have access.
* Notes will also be shared with ECDC subject-matter experts.
* Feedback will be provided orally at the round table on the following day.

Meetings follow-up

* The ECDC Epidemic Intelligence Group Members will be available for brief meetings with individual MS to provide support on technical issues related to reporting public health events (e.g., through EpiPulse) or to discuss specific public health events further.

Evaluation

* The pilot phase will run until the end of 2025. An evaluation of the pilot phase will be conducted by ECDC.
* The evaluation methodology will be discussed with the Threat Detection NFP/OCPs (mode and format to be confirmed).
* The results will be presented during a webinar with the network in early 2026, where the continuation of the meetings will be discussed. A report on the results will be shared with internal and external stakeholders.

Annex

Excerpt from the 2024 Epidemic Intelligence Network Meeting Report

***ECDC/Countries Roundtable: feasibility and way forward***

The proposal for a roundtable table meeting between ECDC and the countries was first discussed and presented during the 2023 annual meeting of the National Focal Points for Threat Detection, EWRS and IHR. In this session, the scope and implementation of these meetings were discussed.

The key points raised during the discussion included:

* Overall, there was agreement with the proposal of having routine meetings between ECDC and the countries. The main focus of the discussion that followed was how these meetings can be structured in order to provide maximum benefits for both ECDC and the countries.
* The need for clear objectives both overall and for each meeting, as this would allow for the optimisation of resources needed at the MS level and for targeting a specific audience, such as relevant experts who need to be informed in advance.
* The need for the meetings to focus on technical aspects, ensure confidentiality, and allow for discussion and feedback in a trusting environment among the participants. The meeting environment should facilitate the sharing of information.
* The frequency of the meetings should allow enough time to gather information in case of acute events. Additionally, MS should be able to invite experts on an ad hoc basis, depending on the topics discussed.
* Sharing of information received from third countries or organisations can be done with or without the involvement of MS in these meetings. ECDC can coordinate with these third countries or organisations to collect information for performing risk assessments.
* To avoid duplication with other meetings, such as the Health Security Committee, these meetings should remain technical and address different points.