Today the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) released the Annual epidemiological report 2011. The major findings are continuous high numbers of tuberculosis cases, the developing epidemic of measles, antimicrobial resistance, ongoing transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and lessons learned from the pandemic of 2009 and 2010, among others. The report illustrates that Europe should always be ready for the emergent diseases that pose a public health risk.

The fifth ECDC Annual epidemiological report presents the analysis of surveillance data reported for 2009 by the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU) and three countries in the European Economic Area (EEA)/European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and provides an analysis of threats detected in 2010. By collating data from across Europe, the report provides an annual picture of the state of infectious diseases in Europe on which public health policymakers can make informed decisions and prioritise action to improve the health of all Europeans. Relevant data can be used both in crisis situations, e.g. outbreaks, and for long-term planning, e.g. monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of public health interventions.

The data of 2009 show that tuberculosis remains a common infection, with nearly 80,000 cases still notified annually across the EU. The report sends worrying signals on outbreaks and epidemics of measles in Europe. Data analysed show that countries need to intensify their programmes for infection control and prudent use of antibiotics to prevent and control the spread of multidrug-resistant strains of bacteria in Europe. One of the major public health concerns is HIV with ongoing transmissions in all countries.

However, the epidemiology in population risk groups continues to differ from country to country. A lesson learned from the pandemic of 2009 and 2010 is the need to strengthen routine seasonal influenza surveillance in hospitals and especially intensive care units in many Member States.

The report identifies emergent diseases in Europe that might pose a risk to public health. The indications are that West Nile virus might have established itself in parts of south-eastern Europe. There have even been locally acquired cases of diseases previously only considered to be imported, like malaria, dengue fever and chikungunya fever.

ECDC now has five years of experience in epidemic intelligence and threat assessment and continues to further develop tools and support Member States in their preparedness activities. In 2010, ECDC monitored 93 threats across Europe. Of these, 83 were new, including poliomyelitis in Tajikistan, cholera in Haiti and West Nile virus infection in Europe. Ten threats were still monitored from previous years. Nearly half of the 2010 threats were of environmental and zoonotic origin (47%), followed by vaccine-preventable and invasive bacterial diseases (13%), food- and waterborne diseases (10%) and influenza (8%).

References