

A note from the editors: changes and stability – looking back to 2012 and forward to 2013

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At the end of every year, editors reflect on their activities, count their successes and check if they met the goals set for their journals. When we think about 2012, one of our achievements stands out – our first impact factor (for 2011). With the allocated 6.15, we shot far beyond our expectations and were placed among the top-10 leading journals in our field [1]. Interestingly, most of the competing journals have profit-oriented business models, different from *Eurosurveillance*, which has a non-commercial publisher, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The attention gained through the impact factor resulted in a steep increase in the number of articles submitted to the journal. This increase concerned mainly regular articles (462 compared with 247 in 2011). While the vast majority of submissions were from Europe, considerably more articles came also from Asia and Africa. We are thankful that authors consider *Eurosurveillance* a good channel to disseminate their research findings.

Of course, the high number of submissions has impacted on our daily routines and on those who collaborate with us. In 2012, more experts than in previous years were contacted and agreed to support us with their scientific judgment about the merits of papers submitted. Some 500 experts (2011: some 380, 2010: some 330) from across the world dedicated time, often on short notice and with tight deadlines, to review for us. We are grateful for their assistance in the evaluation of submissions. In this issue, we publish a list with the names of our peer reviewers in 2012 [2]. We continue to receive informal guidance from our board members, both associate editors and editorial advisors, numerous colleagues at ECDC and other scientists. Even though they remain unnamed here, we highly appreciate their willingness to help and inspire us.

While we had more contacts with our reviewers and authors in 2012, we worked hard to keep up with timely publication and short turnover times. We published 100 rapid communications, 86 regular papers, 14 editorials, and 42 letters and other content. The rejection

rate 43% for rapid communications and 76% for regular papers. However, this should not discourage those who have important data and research from submitting them to us because one of our main objectives remains to contribute to a balanced scientific evidence-base in the fields of epidemiology, surveillance, prevention and control of infectious diseases that are relevant to Europe.

The capability to provide timely peer-reviewed information about relevant events that require rapid public health action is one of the main assets of *Eurosurveillance* and remains high on our agenda. In 2012, when it became known that patients from Saudi Arabia and Qatar with severe respiratory symptoms had been infected with a novel coronavirus [3,4], we were among the first scientific journals to provide authoritative information. In total, we published eight peer-reviewed rapid communications related to the event within three months. Some of them were processed in record speed – 24–48 hours from submission. This was possible with the support of our contributors and reviewers who agree to follow us on a route that is still unusual and sometimes even controversial in the world of scientific publishing. Our intention in providing timely, authoritative, quality-controlled preliminary information relevant for communicable disease control is not to go after headline stories, but to enable public health action. We are well aware that publishing preliminary data needs to be handled with care. Rapid processing may raise questions of quality control and conclusions may change when more evidence becomes available. However, the overall positive experience, gained over 15 years, leads us to conclude that with careful selection and processing, the benefits for public health outweigh the concerns raised and that our approach is justified. This is also confirmed by our authors and dedicated peer reviewers who support the concept actively, with important, good-quality contributions.

Having listed some of our achievements, what can our readers and contributors expect in the coming year? In order to increase transparency, speed up and ease our

interaction with authors and reviewers, we will soon introduce an electronic submission system. Authors and reviewers will be asked to log on to the system and follow the instructions when submitting or reviewing for us. Moreover, as a new editorial policy we will automatically share the reviews for specific papers between the respective referees. This change is in response to repeated requests from many who would like to see the comments from the other reviewer(s) for the paper they commented on, as a learning experience. Another new feature is authors will be expected to outline the contribution of each author to the article – this information will be published at the end of the text. We have also started preparing for a new improved website, taking into account the comments obtained from an earlier reader survey and hope to be able to launch it around the start of 2014.

At the beginning of 2013, there is no need to change the identity of *Eurosurveillance*. Instead, we will stick to our concept of rapid communications and timely publication of regular articles. Relevance for public health, i.e. the control and prevention of infectious diseases, and quality will remain our focus. In addition, we will continue to support dissemination of important and good-quality data from authors in countries with fewer papers in scientific literature databases.

Key points, in our view, for the journal for the coming years are our commitment to open access publishing without author or reader fees and that editors should play a role in safeguarding the credibility, quality and speed of published scientific information. Even if the world of scientific publishing were to change in ways we cannot anticipate today, information provision through mobile platforms, social media and self-service information-gathering has already become a reality. We will watch developments closely and tie in where beneficial for the journal and its readers. We believe that an important task for editors is still to guide experts though the large amount of scientific information available and support them with evidence to make informed decisions, also in the future. Moreover, we will keep an eye on and support new ways of publishing (sharing) large datasets, in particular surveillance data collected at various levels in Europe.

In all our activities, we are supported by our publisher, the ECDC and its Director, to whom we are grateful for continued trust, editorial independence, support and funding. We also hope to be able to rely on our good collaboration with you who are already part of our well-established networks of experts in Europe and beyond, and invite others to join too. Together with our supporters, we look forward to exploring and encouraging new ways of sharing and disseminating data and information for the benefit of public health in the coming years.

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