The European Surveillance System (TESSy) molecular surveillance service (MSS) was launched in late November 2012. This new service enables European Union and European Economic Area countries to upload detailed molecular typing data for Salmonella, Listeria, E. coli (VTEC/STEC) and multidrug-resistant M. tuberculosis (MDR-TB) to the MSS database, hosted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). So far, 13 countries are providing data for the three food and waterborne pathogens, and it is likely that more countries will join the system in 2013. For M. tuberculosis, 23 countries are currently providing molecular typing data. It is likely that in the future, more pathogens will be added to the MSS.

The objective of the data is to (i) improve the speed of detection of dispersed international outbreaks, (ii) improve trace-back of the source of an outbreak and identify risk factors, and (iii) improve investigation of transmission chains across the EU and globally, and (iv) improve Member State response to outbreaks.

Nominated users in countries can query ECDC databases to see if isolates that are genetically similar to isolates found in their country have been detected in other countries. A team of curators guarantees the quality of the data and also performs routine cluster detection. If a cluster is found, countries can then use this cluster information for possible public health action. In such cases, the ECDC Epidemic Intelligence Information System will be used as before to help coordinate action across countries for Salmonella, Listeria and E. coli whereas the European Reference Laboratory Network for TB would be used in the case of MDR-TB. An evaluation of the pilot phase is planned for the end of 2013.