The Communicable Diseases Threat Report (CDTR) is one of the major outputs of epidemic intelligence at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Prepared by the epidemic intelligence team at ECDC, the public version was formerly only distributed to internal experts, competent bodies of Member States, and international organisations. From now on it will be published on the ECDC website on a weekly basis.

The CDTR is intended for epidemiologists and health professionals in the area of communicable disease prevention and control. It summarises information gathered through epidemic intelligence by ECDC regarding communicable disease threats of concern to the European Union. It also provides updates on the global situation and changes in the epidemiology of communicable diseases with potential to affect Europe, including diseases that are the focus of eradication efforts.

According to the founding regulations of ECDC, the Centre should ‘identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health from communicable diseases’ [1]. To fulfil this mandate, the ECDC gathers data from official reports and rumours of suspected outbreaks from a wide range of sources, formal and informal.

Formal reports of suspected outbreaks are received from ministries of health, national institutes of public health, the World Health Organization, academic institutes, including formal notification channels such as the Early Warning Response System [2] and the International Health Regulations [3].

However, in order to ensure a comprehensive picture of health threats to EU security, ECDC gathers epidemic intelligence from informal sources such as media reports, health workers and non-governmental organisations, as well. The objective of epidemic intelligence is to detect, verify, assess and communicate potential or real public health threats as early as possible. Epidemic intelligence enhances the performance of traditional surveillance systems, but also complements them for cross-border alerts and international public health threats.

The ECDC has been implementing epidemic intelligence activities since its creation in 2005 [4]. The early detection at ECDC is in place 24 hours a day including weekends and public holidays.

References