

Public health: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ECDC

2003/0174(COD) - 10/02/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the report by John BOWIS (EPP-ED, UK) and made several amendments to the Commission's proposal. The version adopted is, in large part, the result of an agreement reached in advance with the Council and a compromise between five political groups. The creation of the Centre, whose main task will be to combat risks of epidemics, had benefited from the start from a wide consensus, which was further strengthened by the avian flu outbreak. The following principal amendments were voted by the Parliament: -the European Parliament should be able to appoint two representatives to the Centre's Management Board and that the Board should be expanded so that every Member State can have one representative. There will be three members appointed by the Commission. -the description of the Centre's purpose is amended so that the mission of the Centre is to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health from communicable diseases. In the case of other outbreaks of illness of unknown origin which may spread within or to the Community, the Centre shall act on its own initiative until the source of the outbreak is known. In the case of an outbreak which clearly is not caused by a communicable disease, the Centre shall act only in cooperation with the competent authority upon request from that authority. In pursuing its mission the Centre must take full account of the responsibilities of the Member States, the Commission and other Community agencies, and of the responsibilities of international organisations active within the field of public health, in order to ensure comprehensiveness, coherence and complementarity of action. -the Centre must also coordinate the European networking of bodies operating in the fields within the Centre's mission, including networks arising from public health activities supported by the Commission and operating the dedicated surveillance networks; -when identifying emerging health threats, both physical and mental health threats should be covered; -in addition, one of the Centre's key tasks should be to ensure that the dedicated surveillance networks operate efficiently, inter alia by harmonising and rationalising the operating methodologies; -Member States, third countries and international organisations (in particular the WHO) may request scientific and technical assistance. The Centre shall respond within its financial capacity and mandate; -the Centre should have its own website; -the Centre must conduct an annual evaluation of the current and emerging threats to health in the Community; -in addition, the Centre should foster the exchange of best practices and experience with regard to vaccination programmes; -an independent external evaluation should be undertaken to assess the impact of the Centre on the prevention and control of human disease and the possible need to extend the scope of the Centre's mission to other relevant Community-level activities in public health, in particular to health monitoring; -the Centre must provide scientific and technical expertise to the Member States, the Commission and other Community agencies in the development of preparedness plans, and also in the development of intervention strategies in the fields within its mission; -it will support and co-ordinate training programmes in order to assist Member States and the Commission to have sufficient numbers of trained specialists, in particular in epidemiological surveillance and field investigations, and to have a capability to define health measures to control disease outbreaks; -On the rules of the center, Parliament specified that the Management Board must determine by unanimity of its members the rules governing the languages of the Centre, including the possibility of a distinction between the internal workings of the Centre and the external communication, taking into account the need to ensure access to, and participation in, the work of the Centre by all interested parties in both cases.