



Ombudsman takes next steps in examination of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's (ECDC) work in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

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In the context of [wider strategic work \[Link\]](#) on the response of the EU administration during the COVID-19 crisis, the Ombudsman has been examining the work of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). This inquiry has focused on the ECDC's role in gathering and communicating information on COVID-19. As the European Commission comes forward with proposals to give greater powers to the ECDC, the Ombudsman hopes that her inquiry can help identify some of the issues that may have hampered the ECDC as it sought to tackle this pandemic.

In addition to inspecting documents related to the ECDC's role in managing information about the COVID-19 crisis, the Ombudsman's inquiry team also conducted a [meeting with ECDC representatives \[Link\]](#) in October 2020. The meeting sought to ascertain how, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic, the ECDC gathered and communicated data on COVID-19. It also addressed how the ECDC cooperates with the relevant authorities in EU member states, as well as international organisations and authorities outside the EU, and the transparency of this cooperation.

Building on this inspection and meeting, the Ombudsman now wants to look into certain specific aspects of the ECDC's work in greater detail.



During the ongoing pandemic, the ECDC carried out surveys of member state authorities on specific issues (such as incidence rates of SARS-CoV-2 or capacity of laboratory testing), mainly at the request of the Commission. Among other issues, the Ombudsman's inspection sought to address discrepancies in the results of surveys the ECDC conducted in January and March regarding laboratory capacity in the EU. The ECDC provided some reasons as to why this occurred and the Ombudsman is now following up on this question.

The Ombudsman has also asked the ECDC for clarification concerning the transparency of these surveys. This includes how the information and results are published, with whom they are shared and when, and what information is kept confidential. The Ombudsman is seeking to inspect additional documents related to this issue.

The Ombudsman is also asking the ECDC to give further details on the transparency of its rapid risk assessment, which is updated regularly to reflect the latest scientific assessment on the epidemiological developments relating to COVID-19. The Ombudsman asked the ECDC to use the issue of face coverings to demonstrate this point.