

EAN MONTHLY NEWSFLASH

April Edition

Spotlight on the European Reference Laboratories

Interview with Karin Johansson and Andreas Hoefler



The ECDC EURL Team. From left to right : Maximilian Riess, Karin Johansson, Andreas Hoefler, Brenna Deckert, Daniel Palm.

This month we're putting the spotlight on the newly launched [European Reference Laboratories](#) which started in 2025. [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2371 on Serious Cross-Border Threats to Health](#) (Art. 15) introduced a legal mandate for the Commission to set up European reference laboratories (EURLs) in public health. The aim of these EURLs is to support national reference laboratories to promote good practice and alignment by

threats.

Karin Johansson is a principal expert in molecular surveillance at ECDC and she is in charge of the designation and implementation of the EURLs. **Andreas Hoefer** is a EUPHEM alumni from C2019 and a microbiology and molecular surveillance expert at ECDC in charge of the operational coordination of the EURLs. They have answered a few of our questions on behalf of the ECDC EURL team.

Could you explain what the EURLs are and what their purpose is?

European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) for public health are designated by the European Commission to serve as centres of excellence for laboratory science and diagnostics in the field of public health. Their main purpose is to strengthen EU/EEA preparedness for cross-border health threats by supporting national public health laboratories. EURLs ensure harmonised laboratory methods, improve the comparability of data across countries, provide technical guidance and reference materials, offer training, and coordinate external quality assessments (EQAs). They also contribute to timely detection and response to infectious disease outbreaks, supporting surveillance and public health action.

What EURLs currently exist, and are there plans to establish new ones?

As of November 2024, nine EURLs for public health have been designated under the legal framework of Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 on Serious Cross-Border Threats to Health. These include:

Designated in March 2024:

- Antimicrobial resistance in bacteria
- Vector-borne viral pathogens
- Emerging, rodent-borne, and zoonotic viral pathogens
- High-risk, emerging, and zoonotic bacterial pathogens
- Legionella
- Diphtheria and pertussis

Designated in November 2024:

- Food and water-borne bacteria
- Food, water, and vector-borne helminths and protozoa
- Food and water-borne viruses

These EURLs were selected to cover key public health priorities. Discussions are ongoing about potential future EURLs to address other emerging or cross-cutting threats, depending on evolving epidemiological needs and surveillance priorities.

How does ECDC manage the EURLs, and what is your interaction with the EURL coordinators?

The European commission's DG SANTE, in close collaboration with the ECDC,

systems, outbreak preparedness plans, and public health objectives. ECDC engages with EURL coordinators through regular EURL specific meetings, Network of EURLs meetings, and technical support of deliverable preparations. This close collaboration ensures that the EURLs can successfully support the ECDC disease networks in line with the strategic objectives of ECDC.



First EURLs network meeting in May in Luxembourg with representatives of the 9 EURLs, ECDC and DG SANTE.

First Meeting of the GFEP Technical Working Group on Credentialing



The **Global Field Epidemiology Partnership (GFEP)** is a global coordination platform that brings together national, regional, and international stakeholders to strengthen field epidemiology capacity. Its mission is to support the integration of field epidemiology into health systems, ensure quality and sustainability of training programs, and promote the professionalization of the field epidemiology workforce.

As an affiliated society, EAN is represented in the GFEP by **Ioannis Karagiannis**, President of the EAN Board. He regularly attends meetings and is actively involved in supporting all GFEP strategic activities.

To address complex, cross-cutting challenges and implement its strategic priorities, GFEP has established **Technical Working Groups (TWGs)**. These groups serve as expert bodies that generate technical input for the GFEP Steering Committee, support evidence-based decision-making, and foster collaboration across organizations. Each TWG is designed to deliver specific, actionable outputs aligned with GFEP's long-term goals.

Four TWGs are **launched in 2025**, including the TWG for Credentialing of Field Epidemiologists, the TWG for FETP Institutionalization, the TWG for Field Epidemiology Competencies, and the TWG for Measuring the Impact of FETPs. **The remaining two TWGs will be launched in 2026:** the TWG for Field Epidemiology Career Pathway and the TWG for Resource Mobilization to Implement the GFEP Strategy.

EAN is actively involved in GFEP's technical work. Eftychia Kotronia, Richard Pebody, and Bojana Mahmutović have been selected by EAN to participate in the TWGs. In addition, **Alicia Barrasa**, a member of the EAN board, is also engaged in the credentialing TWG as a representative of UKHSA.

During May 2025, GFEP held the **first meetings of its four Technical Working Groups**.

TWG for Credentialing of Field Epidemiologists brought together representatives from WHO, the U.S. CDC, UKHSA, TEPHINET, AFENET, EAN, and the Australian National University. It's focus is on addressing the current gap in the global health architecture: the absence of an internationally recognized system to assess and certify individual field epidemiologists. While program-level accreditation is managed through TEPHINET, no mechanism exists for credentialing individuals, which limits

The TWG's objective is to develop a plan for a global credentialing framework. It will explore international models from other sectors (such as public health certification and project management credentials), define minimum core competencies, and evaluate how continuous education could be integrated. **The expected outcome is an analytical paper** that outlines possible credentialing models, their advantages and limitations, and a recommended approach. This paper will serve as the foundation for a **draft international credentialing framework**, which will be presented to the GFEP Steering Committee. The TWG will also contribute to drafting the terms of reference for a consultant to support this effort.

The TWG for Credentialing of Field Epidemiologists will continue its work throughout 2025, laying the foundation for a harmonized, inclusive, and high-quality international credentialing system for professionals in field epidemiology.

Be part of the community : ways to stay involved and connected!

Do what you love to do!

You'd like to get active on a project for our community? An experience you'd like to share or a topic you'd like to educate on? Please reach out to us at eanboard@gmail.com if you'd like to discuss your idea and want our support. We are available to help you bringing your ideas come to life.

Support us with mini-assignments

Our community lives from all of us and the capacities of the board alone are limited. Every now and then, we may reach out to ask for your help on specific tasks or activities to get the best out of it for all of us.

Activate your membership

Many benefits are lined up for active members of the network (GOARN requests of assistance, bulletins, discounts on mini-modules, access to specific resources on our website...).

Membership runs from Nov. 1 until Oct 31 of the following year - but you can activate your membership at anytime! **The annual membership fee is now €30 / £28. There is a 10-year membership available at €250 / £230.**

Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees. We have added a new payment option for credit cards to make membership renewal a bit easier. To use this option, please go to our website and follow the instructions there.

you require any further information on membership payment, we kindly ask you to contact the EAN board (eanboard@gmail.com), putting “membership payment” in the subject line. Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to eanboard@gmail.com with a copy of the receipt/invoice to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer). Thank you for your support!

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