**EU Laboratory capacity up by 13% over the past 5 years**

**News story**

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**The new EULabCap data on microbiology system performance in the 30 EU/ EEA countries show continuous improvement. For the first time, all 30 countries have reached intermediate or high capacity levels in 2018.**

[Data released today](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/microbiology/laboratory-capacity-and-capability) show that the national public health microbiology performance index is ranging from 6.2 to 9.7 by country, out of a maximum of 10. The new EULabCap data on microbiology system performance in the 30 EU/ EEA countries show continuous improvement with an average 7.8/10 Index for the EU/EEA in 2018, a 13% score increase over the past 5 years. Overall, 17 countries are showing intermediate level (score 6.0 to 7.9) and 13 countries high level (score 8.0 or above) of laboratory capacity and capability.

Capacity gaps between countries are shrinking, with an index variation reduced by one-third over the monitoring period. For the first time, all 30 countries have reached either intermediate or high capacity levels in 2018. Over two-third of countries now deploy a range of laboratory capabilities sufficient for robust public health preparedness.

Marked progress is noted in the area of molecular surveillance with an average EU/EEA score of 8.7 against the use of advanced whole-genome sequencing methods (as compared to average score of 5.5 in 2016 against a mix of fingerprinting and WGS-based typing methods).

Likewise, the contribution of reference laboratories to outbreak detection and investigation is progressing across countries with an average EU/EEA score of 8.4 in 2018 (compared to 6.0 in 2013). Other areas of progress this year are the provision of diagnostic guidance (average EU/EEA score 8.0 in 2018 compared to 6.0 in 2013) and regulation and support to national reference laboratory services (average EU/EEA score 8.5 in 2018 compared to 8.0 in 2013).

Laboratory preparedness to detect and identify emerging diseases reached an 8.0 average score in 2018. This shows that despite a new indicator list of infectious threats, specialised laboratories are able to respond adequately.

The few areas of persisting suboptimal performance include inadequate usage of key diagnostic tests and limited reference laboratory contribution to EU surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in influenza virus and foodborne bacterial pathogens.

EULabCap is a monitoring system that assesses public health microbiology vulnerabilities, identifying priorities and monitoring the impact of capacity building activities and system reforms at national and EU level on essential public health functions provided by microbiology laboratories.

The system combines 60 indicators grouped by three dimensions: primary diagnostic testing, national reference laboratory services, and surveillance and epidemic response support.