**EVD-LabNet Newsletter 2, March 2025**

## About EVD-LabNet

EVD-LabNet is a multi-disciplinary network of expert laboratories. The aim of EVD-LabNet is to strengthen Europe's laboratory capacity and capability to respond to emerging, re-emerging and vector-borne viral disease threats. The network laboratories are located in the EU/EEA, EU candidate countries, and will be expanding to the EU neighborhood countries. These laboratories have a strong basic and/or translation research competence in virology and human (reference) diagnostics and/or experience in diagnostic test development for viral pathogens. The network is coordinated by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM, Bilthoven, the Netherlands)

## External Quality Assessment of Oropouche virus detection

In 2024, imported cases of OROV disease were reported for the first time in the EU/EEA. For EU/EEA reference laboratories to assess and improve their actual capabilities for molecular detection of Oropouche virus (OROV), EVD-LabNet is organising an External Quality Assessment (EQA) by proficiency testing. The EQA will assess the qualitative capability of laboratories for detection of selected old and recent strains of OROV. Participant registration has completed; 30 laboratories from 18 EU/EEA countries have registered. The panel has been pre-tested and will be shipped to the participants early April 2025.

## External Quality Assessment of detection of *Alphaviruses*.

In 2022 an EQA for molecular detection of emerging alphaviruses (including SINV, ONNV, MAYV, BFV, RRV, EEEV, WEEV, and VEEV) was conducted by EVD-LabNet. This EQA addressed a need for periodical assessment of capabilities to detect a wide range of Alphaviruses that represent a threat for human health. Twenty-three laboratories from 16 European countries participated. Adequate capabilities were lacking for several viruses, and approximately half of the laboratories (11/23) relied on pan-alphavirus assays with varying sensitivity and specificity. Only 46% of laboratories characterized all EQA samples correctly. Correct result rates were > 90% for CHIKV, RRV and SINV, but laboratories lacked specificity for ONNV and MAYV and sensitivity for VEEV, BFV, and EEEV. The peer reviewed publication can be found here: Low capacity for molecular detection of Alphaviruses other than Chikungunya virus in 23 European laboratories, March 2022 | PLOS One

## Webinar on Oropouche virus

On May 7, 2025 EVD-LabNet organises a webinar on Orthobunyaviruses with a focus on Oropouche virus. The webinar is open to all however registration will be required. Registration is possible via this link: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Oropouche_webinar_session_EVD-LabNet The tentative program includes:

- An overview on Orthobunyaviruses, Dr. Lance Presser, RIVM, Bilthoven, the Netherlands
- The emergence of Oropouche virus in Cuba, Prof. Maria Guadalupe Guzmán Tirado (Pedro Kouri Institute, Havana, Cuba).
- Oropouche virus importation in Spain; an overview, Dr. Ana Vázquez, Dr. María Paz Sánchez-Seco Fariñas (Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Madrid, Spain)
- Risk for Oroupouche virus emergence in Europe: presence of competent vectors?, Dr. Olivier Briet, ECDC, Stockholm, Sweden
- Endemic human Orthobunyaviruses in Europe, Prof. Olli Vapalahti (University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland)
- Challenges in the diagnosis of Orthobunyavirus infection. Speaker to be confirmed.

## Scientific Support

Five disease factsheets for health professionals have been written and are in the process of final clearance for publication on the ECDC website ( Related public health topics). These factsheets include:

- Lassa fever
- Enterovirus infection
- Dengue
- Chikungunya
- Orthohantavirus infection

## Designated EURLs for Public Health (EURL-PH)

To date, nine EURLs for public health have been designated by the European Commission. The EURLs for public health are designated for seven years and their activities will be funded under the EU4Health programme. The EVD-LabNet related EURLs for Public Health started officially on 1 January 2025 and include the EURL for Emerging, Rodent-borne and Zoonotic viruses (EURL-PH-ERZV) and the EURL for Vector-Borne Viruses (EURL-PH-VBV).

The EURL-PH-ERZV focuses on viruses within the filo, orthohanta, arena, pox and rabiesvirus groups as well as “disease X”, i.e. any novel viral pathogen. The consortium is led by Public Health Agency of Sweden (PHAS, https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/) with partners in Italy (Institute for Infectious Diseases (INMI), https://www.inmi.it/), France (Institut Pasteur (IP), https://www.pasteur.fr/en/public-health) and Hungary (National Center for Public Health and Pharmacy, NNGyK, Nemzeti Népegészségügyi és Gyógyszerészeti Központ - Főoldal).

The EURL will contribute to diagnostics, surveillance, and outbreak response within EU. The national laboratories that will form the network are currently being identified by the ECDC. As soon at that activity is completed, more direct information will follow, including a survey to gauge the needs for training and twining in the coming year. Other activities for 2025 are currently being planned and involves, among others, a network meeting in Stockholm on November 13-14th 2025, please save the date! The consortium laboratories are primarily contacted via the email address EURL-PH-ERZV@folkhalsomyndigheten.se and more information about us and upcoming activities can be found on the webpage EURL-PH-ERZV.

The EURL-PH-VBV focuses on viruses transmitted by arthopods i.e. ticks, mosquitoes, sandflies and/or midges that are a risk for public health. Virus genera in the focus area of the EURL are *Orthoflaviviruses*, *Alphaviruses*, *Orthobunyaviruses*, *Orthonairoviruses*, *Phleboviruses, Coltiviruses, Orbiviruses, and Seadornaviruses.* More information on the EURL-PH-VBV, including the consortium partners, EURL objectives, activities and contact information can be found on the EURL-PH-VBV website: https://www.rivm.nl/en/eu-reference-laboratory-vector-borne-viral-pathogens

## The end of a 30-year-old network.

This newsletter is the last new bulletin from EVD-LabNet. The network stops in August 2025 and the activities are in the process of being transitioned into the activities of the EURL-PH-VBV and EURL-PH-ERZV within the Emerging and Vector-borne Disease network (EVD-Net) at ECDC.

EVD-LabNet started in 1995 under the name of European Network for Diagnostics of Imported Viral Diseases, ENIVD, which was changed in EVD-LabNet in 2006. Over 30 years, the network has contributed significantly to expertise and laboratory system strengthening regarding imported, rare and emerging viral infections in Europe. Representatives of more than 60 laboratories were part of the network, offered support and participated in workshops, webinars, twinning partnerships, external quality assessments, knowledge and front-line information exchange, and network meetings.

EVD-LabNet excelled in its network functioning with a strong collaborative spirit among the members such that can only be achieved during decades of building of trust and mutual respect, and selfless provision of high-quality support where needed. Times are changing…… but what remains crystal clear is that networking is an essential laboratory preparedness and response tool that takes time to build and that needs continuous nourishing. The network coordinators hope to continue to do exactly that into the future, where strengthening of European expertise and, laboratory capacities and capabilities will continue as part of the EURL-PH system.