



The European Early Warning and Response System (EWRS): Ireland's obligation to report certain communicable disease (i.e. infectious disease) information to the European Community

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The Network for the Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases was established by the European Parliament and Council Decision 2119/98/EC, superseded by [Decision 1082/2013/EU](#). The aim of the Network is to promote cooperation and coordination between the Member States, with the assistance of the European Commission, with a view to improving the prevention and control of communicable diseases in the Community.

The Network includes an [Early Warning and Response System \(EWRS\)](#), which is formed by bringing into permanent communication with one another, through appropriate means, the Commission and the competent public health authorities in each Member State responsible for determining the measures which may be required to protect public health. EWRS was established under [Decision 2000/57/EC](#) (and amended July, 2009 [Decision 2009/547/EC](#)). The EWRS contact points for Ireland are the Director of HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre, and the Assistant National Director for Public Health and Child Health, HSE Health and Wellbeing Directorate.

Member States of the European Union are required to notify other Member States and the European Commission via the Early Warning and Response System in the event of:

1. Outbreaks of communicable diseases extending to more than one Member State of the Community.
2. Spatial or temporal clustering of cases of disease of a similar type, if pathogenic agents are a possible cause and there is a risk of propagation between Member States within the Community.
3. Spatial or temporal clustering of cases of disease of a similar type outside the Community, if pathogenic agents are a possible cause and there is a risk of propagation to the Community.
4. The appearance or resurgence of a communicable disease or an infectious agent which may require timely coordinated Community action to contain it.
5. Manifestation of a disease or an occurrence that creates a potential for a disease pursuant to Article 1 of the [International Health Regulations \(2005\)](#) which is a communicable disease pursuant to Annex to Decision No 2119/98/EC and related



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measures to be notified to the World Health Organization under Article 6 of the International Health Regulations (2005)

In general, no information is provided via this system that could identify any individual.

If a person in one Member State is identified as having been in contact with an individual(s) in another Member State who may be a source of an infectious disease, and as a result, is potentially in danger of developing or have developed a communicable disease, then this person may need to be contacted and provided with advice, and other public health measures may need to be taken. This is known as contact tracing and it is carried out in order to protect public health. In this circumstance, information is provided in confidence to the relevant public health authority, so that they may make contact with the individual(s) concerned in the Member State. This information may include personal information such as name and address, age, contact numbers, details of travel, persons contacted etc.