Testing guidance and reporting for 2019-nCoV in the EU

Infection with the novel cororonavirus should be immediately reported to the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) in accordance with Decision No 1082/2013 on serious cross-border threats to health and to the IHR system in accordance with the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR) [34,35].

ECDC has developed a guidance document Laboratory testing of suspect cases of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) using RT-PCR for the EU/EEA Member States, addressing questions on how to identify suspected cases and when to initiate testing [36].

Preliminary analysis indicated that dedicated novel coronavirus tests are preferable over pan-coronavirus tests. Pan-coronavirus tests will delay results, as they require subsequent sequencing to exclude infection with the common human CoVs. Therefore, laboratories are advised to implement molecular tests specific for 2019-nCoV, such as the test developed at the Institute of Virology, Charité, Berlin (5.1.2e 5.1.2e , 5.1.2e 5.1.2e) and published on the WHO webpage [37,38]. Extensive validation for specificity and robustness of use is currently at the planning stage. Synthetic positive controls can be obtained via the European Virus Archive global (EVAg) catalogue [39]. It is expected that more specific tests will be made available by other international reference laboratories in the near future.

Any positive test should be confirmed by a specific test. Positive samples can be sent for confirmatory testing to one of the two specialised laboratories for coronaviruses in the EU who offer their support:

- Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin Institute of Virology, Berlin, Germany
- Erasmus Medical Center, Department of Viroscience, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.