To: Heads of State and Government of the European Union and European States
CC: Ministers of Health of the European Union and European States

Basel, 14 November 2014

Open letter to urge the EU and European Governments to strengthen their efforts to fight Ebola in West-Africa and to harmonise infection control protocols inside Europe

With the deadly Ebola virus continuing to exponentially spread through West Africa and at the same time keeping all countries in the world busy adapting their health safety precautions, we are writing to you with two pleas:

1) We urge you to reinforce your efforts to successfully fight Ebola in the countries, where the epidemic is raging.
2) We urge you to facilitate and support the harmonisation of infection control protocols inside Europe.

Everyone agrees that after more than half a year has passed since the outbreak began – the Ebola epidemics in West Africa is out of control. The total number of cases is currently at 14,098 and already 5,160 deaths have occurred (as of 12 November 2014) [1]. These numbers are still growing exponentially. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared this Ebola epidemic to be "the most severe acute public health emergency in modern times". The impact on healthcare in the affected countries, as well as the overall economic impact, cannot be grasped in its full extent.

"The best way to reduce the risk of Ebola spreading outside West Africa is to fight it there", says Dr. Joanne Liu, international president of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Together with many non-profit organisations they are working locally with health care workers on the frontline of the Ebola outbreak. Despite their intense efforts they cannot contain the situation without major international provisions including trained personnel, equipment and supplies. To stop the epidemic at its source a joint effort is required that includes the non-profit organisations as well as the support by the European countries.

The European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) and its experts in the infection field urge you to show true commitment and leadership and take immediate and strong action to support the locally acting international organisations in their fight against Ebola in West Africa.
In this global crisis situation, every European country is now working on and using their local protocols for attending potential patients with suspected or confirmed Ebola disease. Despite the existing recommendations and protocols, there is wide heterogeneity across European countries about the use and types of protective equipment, healthcare workers’ training, need for reference hospitals, structural requirements and contacts’ follow-up. The recently published WHO update of the personal protective equipment guidelines for Ebola response [2] is a good example of such recommendations. Now, we think Europe needs a strong task force leading the harmonisation of activities for the prevention of transmission of Ebola in Europe and adequate management of possible and confirmed cases.

**ESCMID urges you to** commit the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to lead this task force to **harmonise infection control protocols and requirements** within Europe. Recently, ESCMID declared infection control and preventive measures a priority within ESCMID and founded the European Committee for Infection Control (EUCIC) comprised of internationally recognised experts in this field [3]; EUCIC is ready to help and collaborate with ECDC or any other national or international institution.

Sincerely,

**Signatories**

**European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID)**
The European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases ([www.escmid.org](http://www.escmid.org)) is a non-profit society registered in Switzerland with offices in Basel. Since its founding in Germany in 1983, ESCMID has evolved to become Europe’s leading society in clinical microbiology and infectious diseases with members from all European countries and all continents. For more than 25 years, ESCMID has been an influential component in the professional lives of microbiologists and infectious disease specialists and now reaches more than 33'000 members and affiliated members around the world. We welcome new colleagues from all nations.

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References