

Novel Coronavirus in China

The Superintendence of Public Health is monitoring the situation of the clusters of pneumonia detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and is following the advice of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

On 12 January 2020 it was announced that a novel coronavirus had been identified in samples obtained from cases and that initial analysis of virus genetic sequences suggested that this was the cause of the outbreak. Some coronaviruses transmit easily from person to person, while others do not. The WHO has reported that there is no clear evidence on human-to-human transmission of this novel coronavirus to date. However, all precautions are being taken to limit spread.

From the risk assessment carried out by ECDC based on the current knowledge and of the several unknowns, ECDC considers that:

1. There is a low likelihood of importation of cases in EU/EEA countries, due to the less extensive traffic of people with Wuhan;
2. There is currently a moderate likelihood of infection for EU/EEA travellers visiting Wuhan;
3. There is a high likelihood of case importation in countries with the greatest volume of people travelling to and from Wuhan (i.e. countries in Asia).
4. Adherence to appropriate infection prevention and control practices, in particular in health care settings, in EU/EEA countries, and the evidence of limited person-to-person transmissibility, make the assessed likelihood that a case reported in the EU would result in secondary cases within the EU/EEA very low.

Travellers planning to visit Wuhan, China should:

1. Avoid visiting wet markets or places where live or dead animals are handled

2. Avoid contact with sick persons, in particular those with respiratory symptoms.
3. Adhere to good hand and food hygiene
4. Avoid contact with animals, their excretions or droppings.

Travellers with acute respiratory symptoms within 14 days of visiting Wuhan are advised to contact their doctor and indicate their travel history to Wuhan and contact the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit on 21324086.

In addition, due to the currently high activity of the seasonal influenza epidemic in China, travellers should receive seasonal influenza vaccination at least two weeks prior to travel to prevent severe disease.

The risk to the Maltese population, as for other EU countries is low. The Maltese authorities have arrangements to manage emerging infectious diseases.