

## Current major event

### Enhancing monkeypox laboratory testing capacity in EMR, 2022

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMR) rapidly convened a meeting with its Member States following the first suspected case of monkeypox in the Region on May 13, 2022 to discuss the preparedness and response to monkeypox. Within 11 days, WHO has undertaken the rapid procurement and delivery of monkeypox diagnostic kits from its logistics hub in Dubai to 20 countries in the Region.

### Editorial note

Monkeypox is a member of the same family of viruses as smallpox. It was discovered in 1958 when 2 outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in monkey colonies and were kept for research. Human monkeypox was then identified in a human in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a 9-year-old boy, in a Region where smallpox had been eliminated in 1968.

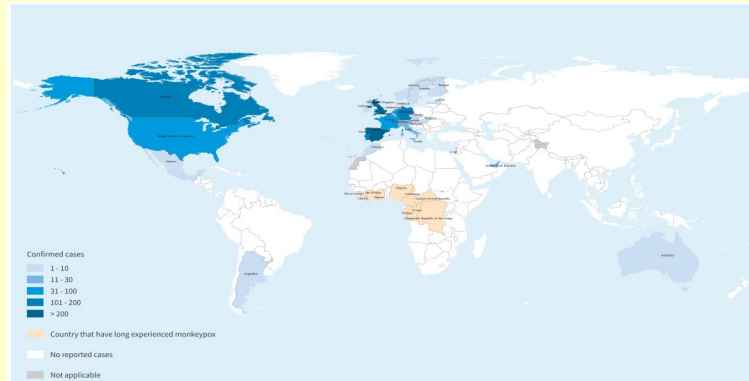
In May 2022, there was a multi-country outbreak of monkeypox affecting a number of countries in Europe. These confirmed cases have no history of travel to previously affected countries in Africa. The outbreak has now spread to more countries across the world, affecting men who have sex with men and who have reported recent sex with new or multiple partners.

Since 2020, WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) has worked tirelessly to enhance the regional laboratory capacities for high threat pathogens, including molecular testing and genome sequencing. WHO-EMR has established, enhanced and equipped 3 regional hubs in the EMR specifically, Abu Dhabi, Morocco and Oman, to carry out genomics and bioinformatics. In parallel, through intensive trainings, twinning initiatives and provision of technical assistance, the other laboratories in the Region have also been enabled and strengthened to implement their own genomic and bioinformatics capabilities and capacities.

This has proved to be timely in light of the recent monkeypox outbreak, as the overall goal of any laboratory is to enable timely and accurate confirmation of emerging infections and to support the interruption of chains of transmission, ultimately stopping the outbreak in respective countries.

During the initial days of the monkeypox outbreak, only 1 country in the Region had

### Geographic distribution of monkeypox cases ,13 May to 8 June 2022



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Data Source: World Health Organization  
Map Production: WHO Health Emergencies Programme  
Map Date: 10 June 2022  
World Health Organization  
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### Recommendations for the Member States

The key recommendations include:

- Biosafety considerations,
- Standard operating procedures and algorithms,
- Specimen types and packaging,
- Sample transportation to WHO collaborating centre,
- Need for vaccination of health care workers with the smallpox vaccine.

secured diagnostic kits for the virus detection. Upon convening first technical meeting with 22 public health institutions and manufacturing companies, WHO-EMR was quick to take action to build up the capacity for national public health laboratories.

Simultaneously, WHO coordinated the procurement and timely dispatch of monkeypox diagnostic kits from its Dubai logistics hub to countries. Two types of kits were procured and distributed: Monkeypox and Orthopox (comprising Variola Smallpox, Vaccinia, Camelpox and Cowpox viruses).

This spectacular collaborative effort, coordination and response has resulted in 11 days turnaround time and has therefore, allowed the use of real time polymerase chain reaction and subsequently genomics sequencing (regional hubs) for the detection and differentiation of monkeypox. All test results for suspected monkeypox cases (positive or negative) are immediately being reported to the national health authorities. The Member States have been also requested to immediately notify WHO under the International Health Regulations (2005) of positive laboratory results including laboratory tests that are still awaiting confirmation.

### Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

#### COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

#### Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

#### Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2022

Afghanistan	[181 120 (7710), 4.3%]
Bahrain	[594 621 (1489), 0.3%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[514 008 (24 720), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 233 528 (141 349) 2%]
Iraq	[2 329 662 (25 222), 1.1%]
Jordan	[1 697 673 (14 068 ), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[635 868 (2555), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 100 871 (10444), 0.9%]
Libya	[502 076 (6430), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 175 104 (16 082), 1.4%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[658 100 (5660), 0.9%]
Oman	[389 917 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 531 179 (30 381), 2%]
Qatar	[371 846 (677), 0.2%]
Saudi Arabia	[776 890 (9170) 1.2%]
Somalia	[26 565 (1361), 5.1%]
Sudan	[62 475 (4950), 7.9%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[55 905 (3150), 5.6%]
Tunisia	[1 044 426 (28 655), 2.7%]
United Arab Emirates	[916 247 (2305), 0.3%]
Yemen	[11 822 (2149), 18.2%]