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Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tuberculosis laboratory services in Europe

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Sustainable support from healthcare bodies is needed to preserve TB laboratory capacity, and maintain personnel and skills, to minimise negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on laboratory services severely disrupted in the early months of pandemic <https://bit.ly/38camaL>

Cite this article as: Nikolayevskyy V, Holicka Y, van Soolingen D, *et al.* Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tuberculosis laboratory services in Europe. *Eur Respir J* 2021; 57: 2003890 [<https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.03890-2020>].

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To the Editor:

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and associated response have undoubtedly had a dramatic multidimensional impact on healthcare services globally, severely disrupting care for many chronic diseases [1, 2]. Direct impact on communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis (TB), especially in developing countries disproportionately affected by TB, is not yet fully understood but is very likely to put national TB programmes under immense pressure and lead to an increase in TB deaths of 8–20% in the near future [3–5]. This predicted increase is largely caused by delays in diagnosis and treatment of new TB cases due to non-pharmaceutical interventions implemented nationally and globally, in order to contain virus transmission [3, 6–8]. Combined COVID-19 and TB infection also poses a challenge from various perspectives [9]. It is anticipated that the number of co-infected patients increases as the pandemic progresses.