



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management
Crisis management and preparedness in health

Luxembourg, 3 June 2020

Health Security Committee

Audio meeting on the outbreak of COVID-19

Summary Report

Chair: Wolfgang Philipp, SANTE C3

Audio participants: AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SK, NO, CH, UK, AL, ME, RS, DG SANTE, DG ECHO, DG HOME, ECDC, WHO

Key Conclusions

Travel restrictions from external borders: The Health Security Committee discussed possible criteria for lifting border measures, based on a background paper presented by ECDC at the request of the Commission on COVID-19 situation in third countries. Several countries have expressed interest in identifying a common approach, however, they also noted difficulties in identifying suitable common parameters that could be indicative as regards the epidemiological situation. Among other things, testing is a very important factor in how many cases are detected and thus determine the incidence, which is not easily comparable between countries. As stated in its recent [technical report](#), ECDC reiterated that border closures can delay the introduction of the virus into a country but only if they are almost complete and rapidly implemented during the early phases of an epidemic, which is only feasible in specific contexts. Available evidence therefore does not support border closures in the current situation where most countries worldwide are experiencing community transmission. In addition, ECDC noted the issue of reliable data, and different approaches for surveillance, which prevents the risk-based classification of countries linked to specific thresholds. ECDC referred to the draft framework for monitoring COVID-19, including a complex set of indicators, which are relevant for the overall assessment of the epidemiologic situation, and can be used by countries. ECDC further noted missing data on epidemiological situation at regional level within the EU/EEA and reminded countries to report on these data. ECDC warned against the lifting of community physical distancing and other IPC measures, as together with testing and contact tracing, they are the most important approach for controlling the spread of COVID-19 in all settings, including during travel. WHO noted that it relies on self-reporting from countries, pointing to similar bottlenecks regarding missing or unreliable data and the issue of comparability due to different country approaches for surveillance and reporting at the global level. The review of the travel recommendation is currently ongoing, criteria are being discussed. DG HOME noted that the issue will also be discussed in the Justice & Home Affairs Council on Friday, where the Croatian Presidency has prepared a discussion paper for the delegations with a number of questions on how they see the topic of lifting the restrictions at the external border. Based on the outcome of debate in this Council meeting, the Commission will take a decision on the way forward.

Follow up:

- *The HSC agreed that a common approach for lifting border measures based on epidemiological information cannot be defined considering the uncertainty of underlying criteria and parameters.*
- *The issue will be further discussed in the Justice & Home Affairs Council.*

2. Draft framework to monitor COVID-19: ECDC presented a draft framework to monitor COVID-19 in the EU/EEA and the UK. The aim of this framework is help Member States to build robust monitoring systems at national level to evaluate the epidemiological situation, track the effectiveness of interventions in place and identify gaps. Key pillars of the framework include country-level coordination; planning, and monitoring, risk communication and community engagement; surveillance, rapid response teams and case investigation; vaccine monitoring; national laboratories (and testing capacity); infection prevention and control; case management; and maintaining essential health services and systems. The framework was prepared considering the WHO COVID-19 strategic preparedness and response (SPRP) monitoring and evaluation framework.

Follow up:

- *The HSC to send comments to the Commission on the framework by 8 June.*
- *ECDC to finalize the framework, in discussion with WHO.*

3. Exit strategies: Countries (AT, BE, DK, NL, FR, IT, NO, UK) provided an update on de-escalation measures, including the opening of shops, restaurants and bars, cultural institutions, followed by comprehensive testing strategy and work on contact tracing apps.

Follow up:

- *The HSC continues to exchange information on de-escalation measures and the impacts of those measures in detail.*
- *Detailed discussion on tracing apps and the use in Member States will follow in next meetings.*

4. Medical evacuation: The Commission informed about recent medevac procedures for the evacuation of COVID-19 infected health care and humanitarian aid workers, coordinated by the Commission with WHO and Member States. The Commission thanked Germany and Belgium for accepting patients and asked for feedback from other Member States when a medevac request is submitted through the Early Warning and Response System.