



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health
Health Security

General Working Group of the Health Security Committee Meeting

Wednesday 03 July 2024 - 10:00-12:30

Summary Report

Chair: Head of Unit, European Commission, DG SANTE B2

Participants: AT, BE, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LI, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL, SE, SI, SK, DG SANTE, DG ECHO, DG HERA, DG HOME, EMA, ECDC, FPI

EU/EEA only

Agenda points

1. Introduction
2. Projects for improving CBRN preparedness and training
3. EC actions
4. AOB: Next GWG HSC Meetings

Key messages

1. Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to raise awareness of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats, to give an update on the state of play of the most relevant initiatives on CBRN in the EU, and to share information on upcoming events and exercises to allow EU and EEA countries to plan and prepare their participation in them. More than 80 participants joined the meeting from EU and EEA countries and EC services. DG SANTE highlighted that the latest [Eurobarometer on perceptions of EU crisis management](#) published on 3 June revealed that Europeans want the EU to play a more prominent role in responding to future cross-border crises.

DG SANTE informed about the high-level conference on '[Crisis Management in the EU and Beyond](#)' organized by the European Commission with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy on 6 June, which explored how to prepare for and manage crises and took stock of experience gained from past crises.

DG SANTE also informed about the *Contribution Agreement on CBRN hazards: Enhancing public health and crisis-response capacities in Ukraine, neighboring countries and beyond*, between the European Commission and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. This action is expected to reinforce preparedness and response capabilities particularly concerning CBRN threats, both in participating countries and regionally.

2. Projects for improving CBRN preparedness and training

Joint Action (JA) on Strengthened International Health Regulations and Preparedness in the EU ([JA SHARP](#)) ran from March 2019 to September 2023 with the overall aim to strengthen the implementation of the International Health Regulation and preparedness against biological and chemical health threats in Europe. SHARP JA gave an overview on the outcomes of Work Package 9 (WP9) on Chemical Safety and Chemical Threats. Under WP9, among others, a report was produced on the potential of establishing an EU-wide chemical network for the laboratory analysis of chemicals to support chemical incident response across Europe. The report found that there was interest in establishing such a network and suggested some next steps which could be taken to start this process.

[JA TERROR](#) (Strengthened preparedness and response to biological and chemical terror attacks) gave an overview of the work of its WP6 on Cross sectoral collaboration, and WP8 on Novel threats. WP6 produced so far, some preliminary main recommendations and is working on finalizing a guiding document to provide observations to countries. This guidance looks at some mechanisms that countries need to have in place to handle situations in case of biological or chemical attacks. WP8 focuses on health preparedness for novel threat agents, including synthetic biology, synthetic opioids, and dual use technology. The objectives of WP8 include gaining information on the current state-of-play of novel threat agents; producing risk assessments on these novel threat agents and recommendations for health preparedness; and recommending standardized guidelines and practices. JA TERROR is developing guidance for partner countries to be presented in the final conference in Serbia at the end of November 2024.

3. EC actions

The Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI) gave an overview on the [Centres of Excellence \(CoE\)](#) global initiative which was established in 2010 and works with 64 partner countries across 8 regions around the world to strengthen CBRN safety and security, as well as mitigate CBRN risks and helps strengthen all-hazards security governance. The CoE carry out national and regional activities related to strengthening CBRN legal frameworks; improving CBRN capacities of first responders; building capacity for CBRN detection; improving waste management; strengthening border controls; and improving capacities for CBRN medical preparedness.

DG HOME gave an update on the state of play of the 2017 EU CBRN Action Plan which seeks to enhance preparedness against CBRN security risks. The Action Plan has four main objectives: reducing the accessibility on high-risk chemicals; preparedness; international cooperation; and enhancing the knowledge of CBRN risks. DG HOME explained that they are waiting for the new Commission to assume office to revise the Action Plan, to focus more on preparedness. DG HOME also presented some Internal Security Fund projects, including the [Safe Stadium project](#).

DG HOME also gave an overview of the different deliverables and projects under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, focusing on [Cluster 3, Civil security for society](#), with a component for medical purposes and/or relating to cross-border CBRN threats. Cluster 3 is structured in six destinations, including fighting crime and terrorism; border management; resilient infrastructure; disaster relief societies; strengthened security research and investment; and cybersecurity.

DG ECHO gave an overview of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCMP) CBRN assessment mission to Ukraine which had the following objectives: identifying areas to strengthen Ukraine's ability to respond to CBRN hazards; assessing the response and preparedness capacity of State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU); and identifying areas of cooperation and assistance. The report with recommendations of the mission is being reviewed by SESU. SESU will then report on the implementation of the recommendations and effectiveness of the CBRN advisory mission.

DG ECHO also presented the EU Integrated Resolve 2024 (IR24) EU-NATO Parallel and Coordinated Exercise (PACE 24) which will take place between 21 to 25 October. DG ECHO and DG SANTE invited EU/EEA countries to nominate their training audiences, including for the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS). PACE 24 is a cross-sectoral crisis management exercise in a complex hybrid environment. The exercise will be inter-institutional, and it aims to increase the exercise realism and added value to crisis managers; to increase the engagement of EU Member States, and interactions between EU-level mechanisms. For SANTE, the main mechanisms to be tested are the HSC, rapid risk assessments (with involvement from the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), and the European Environmental Agency (EEA)) and EWRS (alert notifications and support for MEDEVAC).

DG ECHO also presented the Casualty Move (CAMO24) exercise, which will take place between 9 to 13 September and its main goal is to assess and further develop the procedures for civil-military interaction that will enable seamless transnational, tactical, and strategic movement of patients by national and supranational civilian and military medical stakeholders/actors in a multinational border-crossing patient-flow management.

DG HERA reported about a classified workshop that took place on 19 and 20 June. The purpose of the workshop was to help understand and determine the quantities of medical countermeasures for CBRN cross-border health threats, with the aim of increasing preparedness at European level.

4. AOB: Next GWG HSC Meetings

DG SANTE informed about the next General Working Groups Health Security Committee meetings. The next dates for the meetings are 09 July, 24 July, and 21 August (if needed).