



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

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

Luxembourg, 13 March 2020

## Health Security Committee

### Summary

### 11<sup>th</sup> meeting on outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

**Chair:** Wolfgang Philipp, SANTE C3

**Audio participants:** AT; BE; BG; CY; DE; DK; EE, ES; FR; HU, IE; IT; LU; LV; MT; NL; NO; PL; PT; SE; SI; DG SANTE, DG HR MS, DG RTD, DG DEVCO, DG ECHO; DG MOVE; Cabinet. Council; EEAS, EMA, EASA, ECDC, WHO Euro, UK participant attending the agenda point of the meeting

#### Key Conclusions

1. Situation Update: DG SANTE noted the increasing trends in the number of cases in EU/EEA countries and the UK, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland.
2. ECDC Risk Assessment: The ECDC presented the updated risk assessment. The risk of severe disease associated with COVID-19 infection for people in the EU/EEA and UK is currently considered **moderate** for the general population and **high for older adults and individuals with chronic underlying conditions**. In addition, the risk of milder disease, and the consequent impact on social and work-related activity, is considered **high**.

The options to be considered by national authorities for response include:

Social distancing measures should be implemented early in order to mitigate the impact of the epidemic and to delay the epidemic peak. This can interrupt human-to-human transmission chains, prevent further spread, reduce the intensity of the epidemic and slow down the increase in cases, while allowing healthcare systems to prepare and cope with an increased influx of patients.

3. Follow-up to Council Meetings: DG SANTE reminded that two meetings of the EPSCO took place, on 6 and 12 of March with regards to COVID-19. Delegations called for more coordinated action to address possible shortages of key medical equipment, devices, and medicines. They also called for more and better information sharing on national measures. The need for a multi-sectoral approach to tackling the outbreak was highlighted, and the need to address the EU's dependency on external supplies of medicines and key substances. The EPSCO meeting on 12 March followed the videoconference by Heads of State and Government of 10 March, which expressed the need to act swiftly and take a joint European approach to limit the spread of the virus. All ministers agreed on the need

for a coordinated approach based on the ECDC recommendations, although in different intensities with some emphasising the need for common measures and others calling for tailor-made solutions depending on specific situations.

#### 4. Updates from DG SANTE:

- Joint Procurement:  
The **joint procurement procedure for personal protective equipment** is ongoing under the Joint Procurement Agreement for medical countermeasures. The Commission relaunches the joint procurement of eye protection and respirators asap. The Commission is working on a joint procurement of ventilators. The Commission and EMA is discussing with producers the availability of investigational therapeutics.
- ECDC guidance and technical reports:  
**ECDC has produced technical reports**, such as recommendation for decision making on the mass gatherings. The Commission further requested ECDC to prepare guidance on the rational use of PPE under scarcity conditions; overview report on readiness of national crisis emergency systems; guidance on health systems contingency planning to address scenario 4, including flyers for risk groups; action plan for addressing the impact of bans on the EU health preparedness; and update case definitions.
- Advice from Joint Action HEALTHY GATEWAYS:  
The **Join Action EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS** has provided advice for preparedness and response to cases of COVID-19 at ground crossings (trains and rail stations, as well as buses and bus stations) in EU Member States and EEA countries and further proposes to set up a real-time operation centre that maritime points of entry (ships and ports) across Europe can call to get advice and recommendations.
- rescEU mechanism:  
The Commission is working on the development of medical capacities under the **rescEU mechanism** to allow the stockpiling of various products vaccines and therapeutics, intensive care medical equipment, personal protective equipment, laboratory supplies.
- Meeting with neighbouring countries:  
DG SANTE informed the HSC on a meeting with enlargement and neighbouring countries to discuss preparedness and response measures in these countries, involving also ECDC and WHO. Ways to include access to the HSC and EWRS on Covid-19 will be explored.
- Establishment of a clinical case management working group:  
DG SANTE proposed the establishment of a working group of the HSC on clinical case management, to advise, inform and share best practices, provide expertise and identify actions for considerations by Member States in the areas of clinical management (diagnosis and treatment) and clinical trials.

#### 5. Operational Conclusions:

- Early Warning and Response System: ECDC and WHO will agree early next week on a uniform reporting of cases through the EWRS and IHR channels. DG SANTE

will work with ECDC to streamline the updates provided on the EWRS through a single notification. Information will be shared as soon as available on the process.

- Recommendation on measures: DG SANTE will share with the HSC for agreement and further discussion a table summarizing recommended measures to be implemented in countries depending on scenarios developed by the ECDC. An HSC with MS only will be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> to specifically discuss each recommended measures and have an agreement on these measures at the level of the HSC.
- Recommendation regarding cruise ship season: DG SANTE will communicate with DG MOVE on the usage of the recommendation shared by the Joint Action HEALTHY GATEWAYS regarding postponing cruise ship travels.
- Joint Procurement: DG SANTE is asking MS to coordinate with their representative at the Steering Committee of the Joint Procurement Agreement regarding needs for PPE, ventilators, testing reagents etc. These needs should be received by closure of business (13.03.2020).
- RescEU: DG SANTE will keep the HSC informed of the development regarding to the implementing act on RescEU. DG SANTE asked the HSC to liaise with their civil protection counterparts on this point.
- Working group on clinical management: countries to nominate members to this specific working group on clinical management and to provide comments on the Terms of References by 16 March, 10:00am.
- Exchange platform for clinicians: DG SANTE will share with the HSC a summary on the suggested exchange platform on information on clinical management developed and managed by colleagues in DG SANTE dealing with European Reference Networks.
- Meeting with enlargement and neighbouring countries: DG SANTE invited the HSC to the meeting next Tuesday. DG SANTE notes the request of Germany regarding the need for taking this discussion at higher level (through EPSCO or WHO).
- Recommendation regarding prison management: Following a question of Belgium, WHO informed that a recommendation for management of prison in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak will be shared during next week by the WHO, SANTE asked that ECDC will be invited to comment on the draft before release.
- Summary of current measures: A summary of measures taken by countries, gathered from various sources (EWRS, HSC, ISAA report, Commission Rrepresentations) will be shared with the HSC at regular intervals.