



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

General Working Group of the Health Security Committee Meeting

Friday 17 May 2024 – 10:30-12:00

Flash Report

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

Participants: AT, BE, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LI, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, IS, DG SANTE, DG ECHO, DG HERA, EMA, ECDC, WHO

EU/EEA only

Agenda points

1. Threat scanning and prioritization – information and discussion point
2. Antimicrobial resistance – Information point
3. AOB

Key messages

1. Threat scanning and prioritization – information and discussion point

The coordinator of the HORIZON EUROPE project “VACCELERATE” gave an overview of the results of a recent survey among 187 experts from 58 countries to identify and rank a list of 15 pathogens with pandemic potential. Among these, Influenza, SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2 and Ebola virus were found to be the most concerning pathogens with pandemic potential. The ranking of these pathogens was influenced by their transmissibility through respiratory droplets, and their history of endemic or pandemic outbreaks.

ECDC provided an overview on their work on prioritisation of infectious disease risks for emergency preparedness and response. ECDC has a planning cycle through which they identify and evaluate the risk, followed by supporting Member States in developing and assessing their pandemic preparedness plans. ECDC has also carried out stakeholder consultations on the prioritisation of infectious disease threats at national level. The criteria ECDC uses to assess these threats include risk trajectory, epidemic potential, disease severity, preparedness, and countermeasures. The ECDC is planning an EU/EEA level exercise that would focus on identifying the pathogens that could cause highly disruptive epidemics and pandemics.

DG HERA gave an overview on their approach to threat prioritization, which looks at strengthening Europe’s ability to ensure the availability of and access to key medical countermeasures (MCMs). In 2022, HERA identified three serious cross-border health threats (agents with pandemic potential, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) threats, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)) to guide its actions on monitoring, research and development, production, procurement and stockpiling of MCMs. In 2023, HERA identified two additional threat subtopics i.e. environmental health threats and emerging technologies. HERA is in the process of updating their Threat Prioritization Report for 2024. HERA is also conducting CBRN MCMs quantification activities to determine quantities of MCMs for cross-border health threats as well as workshops to discuss CBRN MCMs with Member States.

DG SANTE gave an overview on health related CBRN actions to build response capacities, more specifically looking at projects funded by the EU4Health programme. These actions include: a contribution agreement with WHO EURO on enhancing public-health and crisis-response capacities in Ukraine and neighbouring countries; the Joint Action Terror (JA TERROR), which looks at strengthening preparedness and response to biological and chemical terror attacks; and Joint Action SHARP which looks at strengthening international health regulations and preparedness in the EU. DG SANTE also explained that the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) is being updated to include interlinkages with other rapid alert systems, and the environmental and chemical taxonomy for notifications is being revised.

France was invited to present their preparedness activities against communicable disease and CBRN threats for the upcoming Olympics and Paralympic Games. The French Ministry of Health has taken several actions, including mapping risks and threats; identifying, and strengthening health surveillance and systems; coordinating and mobilizing stakeholders taking part in surveillance and early warning; and risk communication and community engagement activities. Specifically, on CBRN threats, France has been strengthening their resources and stocks, such as protective and detection equipment, and countermeasures for treating victims.

2. AMR – information point

The EU Delegation in New York to the United Nations (UN) was invited to give an overview on the preparations and EU approach to the High-Level meeting on AMR in the UN General Assembly taking place in September 2024. The preparations to the meeting include an EU coordinated approach, which includes an EU non-paper. The EU non-paper includes seven focus areas, among them: national action plans, financing, measurable goals, independent panel, surveillance and monitoring, infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship, and research and innovation.

3. AOB: Information point exchange of national plans – Article 6

DG SANTE is organizing meetings to facilitate the sharing of experiences on national prevention, preparedness, and response plans in line with Article 6 of the Regulation 2371/2023 and to support the networking of national competent authorities responsible for developing and implementing these plans. The meetings will also support the development of the EU Training Programme on prevention, preparedness, and response Planning (Article 11) and the Union prevention, preparedness, and response Plan (Article 5).

4. AOB: TWG on Preparedness – Follow up on nominations.

The Technical Working Group on Preparedness (TWG) of the Health Security Committee will hold an in-person meeting in Luxembourg from 13–14 June. The meeting will focus on the implementation of the preparedness elements of the Regulation on Serious Cross-Border Threats to Health. DG SANTE reminded Member States to nominate representatives to the meeting in case they have not done so yet.

5. AOB: HSC on 24 May on avian influenza with Chief Veterinary Officers

A joint Health Security Committee and Chief Veterinary Officers meeting will take place on 24 May and will be dedicated to avian influenza.