



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health
Health Security

Summary Report

Health Security Committee

Ad-hoc virtual meeting on chemical and radio-nuclear (CRN) threats

Luxembourg, Tuesday, 3 October 2023, 15:00 – 17:00

Summary: HSC members and their CRN experts were informed on the main ongoing activities of EC (DG SANTE, DG ENER, DG ECHO) related to CRN threats, and WHO EURO as well as an external expert under contract with SANTE also shared information on their work on CRN health preparedness and response. The topics covered were: results of the survey on EU Member States' (MS) CRN capacities and needs, the EU RN incidents notification run by DG ENER, the state-of-play of new developments of the EWRS for all-threats reporting in particular regarding the revision of the chemical taxonomy, including environmental threats, the EC-WHO/EURO contribution agreement to support CBRN health preparedness and response in Ukraine and neighbouring countries (EU4Health workplan 2023), and the planned WHO Joint Assessment and Detection of Events (JADE) 2023 radio-nuclear simulation exercise for WHO/EURO MS and EC on 14-16 November.

MS positively acknowledged the info received; NL already indicated that they are interested to work with SANTE on the revision of the chemical/environmental taxonomy in EWRS.

SANTE asked for further feedback by 3 November on several issues, including the outstanding contributions to the C-RN preparedness and response survey, the revision of the chemical/environmental taxonomy in EWRS in general and the availability of MS experts to work with SANTE on this revision, and the nomination of a national contact point for the future chemical/environmental risks and alerts module of EWRS.

Detailed report:

1. EU MS CRN capacities and needs survey results – presentation by DG SANTE B2

The presentation covered the main results of the survey launched on 28 July based on replies from 17 countries (15 EU MSs, two EEA countries). Most of the replying countries reported to have/plan/consider preparedness activities in public health for a CRN incident in Ukraine. The same could be concluded for bilateral/multilateral cooperation/coordination agreements in place with other EU/EEA countries or Ukraine or Ukraine's bordering countries, in case of a serious CRN incident in Ukraine with cross-border implications. Most of the replying countries did not consider that there is an increased risk for a serious CRN incident due to the situation in Ukraine. In general, countries seem somewhat less prepared for, and less concerned about the risk of a chemical incident (in comparison to a RN incident). Half of the countries are having, planning or considering training activities on CRN threats. The majority of the replying countries considered a simulation exercise for a CRN incident to be organized by EC/WHO in the future as

useful. The survey remains open for further replies until 3 November to achieve an as high as possible country coverage. SANTE asked the remaining 13 countries to reply to the survey or inform SANTE that they do not wish to do so.

2. EU RN incidents notification – presentation by DG ENER

DG ENER gave an overview of the EU RN notification system. DG ENER operates two systems (EURDEP and WebECURIE) for the exchange of data during a radiological incident. The European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) system is the technical implementation of Council Decision 87/600/Euratom, which requires that in case of a RN emergency when a country decides to take measures to protect its population, it must promptly notify the EC. After authentication, the EC promptly forwards this notification to all ECURIE members. The system provides a continuous flow of information during the incident. Within ECURIE, Web-ECURIE is a Web-based application that accepts structured or non-structured information, while EURDEP is a platform for the real-time exchange of high volumes of data and presentation of data relative to the radioactivity levels measured in the countries participating in EURDEP.

3. New developments of EWRS for all-threats reporting – presentation by DG SANTE B2

In line with the Regulation 2371/2022/EU on serious cross border threats to health, all threats to health (except RN), biological, chemical and/or environmental as well as unknown threats need to be reported to the EU Early Warning and Response System (EWRS). This way, the EC and EU/EEA countries are quickly informed about events fulfilling the criteria for serious cross border threats to health. A series of developments are under way - managed by SANTE B2 Health Security Unit - to facilitate the reporting of all-threats. Special emphasis was given to the ongoing update of the EWRS taxonomy and variables to be reported, ensuring interoperability with other EU alert and information systems, particularly regarding the chemical/environmental threats reporting.

4. Ukraine and neighbouring countries WHO Contribution agreement EU4Health AWP 2023 – presentation by WHO/EURO

A new contribution agreement with WHO/EURO is under preparation for ensuring public health and crisis response in Ukraine and neighboring countries. The objective of the action is to reinforce the prevention, preparedness, and response capacities for all threats (i.e., CBRN threats) in Ukraine and (neighbouring) other countries participating in the EU4Health Programme. 10 countries have already expressed interest to participate/contribute. Any other country willing to participate should contact as soon as possible DG SANTE B2 and WHO/EURO. This grant agreement is expected to be signed in Q4/2023.

5. Joint Assessment and Detection of Events (JADE) 2023 – radio-nuclear simulation exercise (RN SIMEX) – presentation by WHO EURO

JADE 2023 will be a one-day regional functional simulation exercise focusing on radio-nuclear threats. Each IHR State Party in the WHO European Region is invited to participate in one of three identical exercise days during 14-16 November 2023 (two in English – on 14 and 15 November, and one in Russian on 16 November). The scenario involves a public health event with consequences on human health and requiring multisectoral coordination. The JADE 2023 for the EU/EEA countries will be hosted under the EWRS simulation environment, fostering the use of the EWRS for National IHR focal points reporting, in the EU and EEA countries.

6. Revision of the chemical taxonomy (including environmental) in EWRS – presentation by DG SANTE's external expert

To reach all threats reporting in EWRS, one of the priority actions considered is to review the EWRS current chemical and environmental threats taxonomy. A subject matter expert is currently supporting DG SANTE/B2 on carrying out the following tasks: assess the rapid alert system for chemicals (RAS-CHEM), establish a list of chemical agents that may cause serious cross-border threats to health in the EU and EEA countries, and propose a methodology for prioritizing the chemical agents or events that should be monitored and reported, using EWRS.

7. AOB

- DG ECHO gave an overview of the European capabilities and strategic reserves that can be mobilised in case of a CBRN emergency.
- DG SANTE announced a MEDEVAC request from the Ministry of Health of Armenia for medical evacuation of burn and wounded patients and requested the EU health authorities to assess if there are available beds in hospitals for treatment. Official offers shall be made by the Civil Protection authorities in CECIS. There is also a communication channel (selective exchange “MEDEVAC – Armenia”) set up on EWRS.