

## **Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental and Emerging Risks**

### **(SCHEER)**

#### **Third Annual Meeting of the Pool of Experts**

**26 & 27 November 2019**

### **Minutes**

#### **Introduction**

The Chair welcomed the participants in the third annual meeting of the SCHEER working group on rapid risk assessment and the pool of experts. 48 experts participated in the annual meeting. The Deputy Head of unit of SANTE C2 unit, Country Knowledge and Scientific Committees also welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of having a range of expertise in the Pool of Experts to cover all aspects of the chemical rapid risk assessment process.

#### **The SCHEER committee - an overview of its role**

The Chair of the SCHEER presented the SCHEER committee and its role and provided an overview of areas in which SCHEER provides scientific advice and risk assessment.

#### **The roles of the SCHEER rapid risk assessment working group and the pool of experts**

The SCHEER secretariat presented the legal background to chemical threats laid down in Decision 1082/2013 and in the International Health Regulations (IHR), the procedure for rapid risk assessment provided by the SCHEER<sup>1</sup> and the role of the working group on rapid risk assessment and the pool of experts.

#### **Evaluation of exercises and lesson learned**

The presentation summarised the exercise Sofia and lessons learned from the exercise. Exercise Sofia was run three times (27 June, 3 July and 11 October 2019) with seven *ad-hoc* working groups participating during these 3 days, with a total of 47 experts from both the SCHEER working group on rapid risk assessment and from the pool of experts. The exercise ran much more smoothly than in previous years, partly because training sessions on the tools (SharePoint and WebEx) were organised in the spring to prior to the exercises and also because a number of participants had gained experience on what was required in previous exercises (run in 2018 and 2017).

#### **Competencies**

The Chair of the SCHEER Working Group on Rapid Risk Assessment (WG RRA) presented a document describing the minimum competencies that need to be fulfilled by the SCHEER RRA WG and member of the Pool of Experts.

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<sup>1</sup>Guidance on ad hoc rapid risk assessment of serious cross-border chemical health threats performed by the SCHEER  
[https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/scientific\\_committees/scheer/docs/scheer\\_o\\_005.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/scientific_committees/scheer/docs/scheer_o_005.pdf)

### **Sources of information used in RRA, an example (e.g. databases)**

The Patchwork tool, which refers to 36 publicly accessible websites and databases from national or international authorities, was presented. It contains toxicity data of chemicals hazardous to human health, which have been arranged into a flow diagram. The SCHEER WG on RRA will update the list of toxicological sources with the information provided in the presentation.

### **Structure and processes of the network of poison centres in Europe**

The General Secretary of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT) presented the structure and process of the European poison centres' network. The network includes more than 270 members from more than 55 countries working in poisons centres, hospitals, universities, industry or government agencies. Its aim is to promote training and set standards for the practice of clinical toxicology and the operation of poisons centres and to contribute to EU initiatives on chemical regulations and cross-border chemical health threats. This includes also surveillance activities, which were used to inform partners in other countries and exchange information on ongoing cases of a (potential) cross-border dimension, e.g. in methanol poisoning in the Czech Republic in 2012 or the recent cases of pulmonary toxicity due to e-cigarettes.

### **Recent events**

The experts involved in the rapid risk assessment of the incident involving a fire at the factory of Lubrizol in Rouen in France on 26 September 2019 provided a feedback on the process. An *ad hoc* RRA WG comprising five experts was set up to assess the situation and to put together a hazard statement.

The SCHEER members presented case studies from Member States - methanol poisoning in the Czech Republic in 2012 and public health response to this incident and the cases of contamination by Novichok in Salisbury and Wiltshire in 2018 and government and public health response linked to these incidents.

### **Response documents and roles**

The planning group introduced the templates used for rapid risk assessment of chemical threats - Hazard statement, Case definition, RRA template and CERM sheets and summarised the main roles and their responsibilities within the *ad-hoc* working group on rapid risk assessment.

### **Exercise**

Members of the planning group introduced a scenario for the groups' exercise. The scenario involved a detonation of incendiary device and a subsequent release of sulphur mustard.

The participants were divided into six groups to provide a hazard statement for sulphur mustard, a case definition for a person or persons exposed to sulphur mustard and two groups were asked to review the relevant CERM sheet. The exercise was followed by a discussion on the output documents and improvements in the templates.