

Joint ECDC and ASEF workshop

How can we be better prepared for the next global health threat? Planning and implementing emergency risk communication
7-8 September 2016, Stockholm, Sweden

Scope and Purpose

Background

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) are in partnership hosting a multi-country, cross-sectorial workshop focussing on public health emergency preparedness.

ECDC is a European Union (EU) Agency with the mission to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases¹. Under the legislative act, *Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health*², EU Member States have been called to further develop, strengthen and maintain their capacities to monitor, identify (early warning and assessment) and respond to serious cross-border health threats to health. Under the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Health Regulation of 2005, countries are committed to further build their capacities to detect, assess and notify, and report on public health emergencies of international concern³. The ECDC⁴ therefore looks to support the EU as well as European Economic Area (EEA) Member States and the European Commission in this area by providing tools and guidelines for evaluating levels of preparedness, identifying potential gaps and vulnerabilities, and strengthening the capacities where needed.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)⁵, founded in 1997, is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation representing the 53 ASEM⁶ Partners; 20 Asian and 32 European (29 EU/EEA) countries, plus the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Union. Following the 6th ASEM Summit (ASEM6; 2006; Helsinki, Finland), where the leaders expressed their determination to combat avian influenza and a possible human influenza pandemic, the ASEM Initiative for the Rapid Containment of Pandemic Influenza, financially supported by the Government of Japan, was launched at the 9th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM9; 2009; Hanoi, Viet Nam). Since then, the 2 components of the Initiative (ASEM stockpile of antivirals

¹ www.ecdc.europa.eu

² *Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 2119/98/EC:*

http://ec.europa.eu/health/preparedness_response/docs/decision_serious_crossborder_threats_22102013_en.pdf

³ *International Health Regulations (2005)* <http://www.who.int/ihr/9789241596664/en/>

⁴ *Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 establishing a European centre for disease prevention and control* http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/aboutus/Key%20Documents/0404_KD_Regulation_establishing_ECDC.pdf

⁵ www.asef.org

⁶ <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/>

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and personal protection equipment as well as ASEF Public Health Network) have contributed to strengthening ASEM Partners' capacity for managing public health emergencies.

From 2010 to 2013, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Public Health Network organised a series of workshops under the project, *Asia-Europe Foundation – Accurate Scenarios Active Preparedness (ASEF-ASAP)*⁷, to strengthen multi-sectorial pandemic preparedness and response. Among the recommendations developed from these workshops, strengthening risk communications emerged as a common need across sectors. Following this recommendation, ASEF has implemented three workshops on risk communications since 2013. Both the health and non-health sectors across Asia and Europe underlined the need for building capacity for managing communications before/during/after health crises and for attaining policy and programme support for risk communications.

In an interdependent world, international and interregional cooperation is of particular importance. Public health incidents in general and, in particular, communicable disease outbreaks, may rapidly affect other countries and even trigger emergency crises in other regions. Public health emergency risk communication is an essential component in any response to a public health emergency and subsequently a crucial section of any public health emergency preparedness plan and for which competencies need to be defined and capacities and capabilities ensured. In such an interconnected world as today, effective partnerships and international cooperation between and within sectors are essential to effectively address such threats and prevent further spread; the recent events related to the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) being but one example.

It is in the above context that the ECDC and ASEF look to jointly host the capacity-building workshop; *"How can we be better prepared for the next global health threat? Planning and implementing emergency risk communication"*.

Objectives

The overall aim of this workshop is to strengthen the link between Emergency Risk Communication (ERC) and Public Health Emergency (PHE) Preparedness planning, underlining the importance of integrating ERC into a PHE preparedness plan. The workshop will further seek to identify the competencies (skills) needed to secure the implementation of ERC within a preparedness plan and subsequently what capacities (resources) and capabilities (knowledge) are required to ensure these skills.

⁷ <http://asef.org/pubs/asef-publications/2947-accurate-scenarios-active-preparedness>

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Specific objectives are:

- To recognise the complexity and the role of ERC before, during and after public health emergencies.
- To understand the PHE Preparedness cycle and the integral part ERC plays in a PHE preparedness plan.
- To identify the components needed in a PHE preparedness plan to ensure coordinated, coherent and consistent ERC.
- To identify the competencies required to secure the implementation of ERC, as defined in a preparedness plan; and subsequently how to build capacities and capabilities for this.
- To draw recommendations and conclusions on actions needed in order to be prepared for future public health events and ERC around these.

Target audience

The meeting will address stakeholders in the areas of PHE risk communication, PHE preparedness planning, and PHE training, from both EU/EEA countries and from Asian countries. From the EU/EEA, the meeting will bring together the members of the ECDC Public Health Network Coordination Committees for Communication; Preparedness and Response; and Public Health Training, respectively. Supporting the ECDC as an advisory body, the members of these three committees are ECDC National Focal Points for their countries and, within the context of the committee, they represent their respective Networks and contribute with their country-perspective as public health practitioners. As a facilitator and connector between Asia and Europe in the field of risk communications for public health, ASEF will bring together Public Health Experts in the same three areas from selected ASEM Asian Partners as well as civil society representatives across Asia and Europe. In addition, the workshop will include invited delegates from partner organisations and keynote speakers involved in preparedness and response planning, communication and training.

Methods

The overarching aim of the workshop is to seamlessly integrate Emergency Risk Communications planning within Public Health Emergency preparedness. This will be addressed by first understanding the complexity and role of emergency risk communication before, during and after public health emergencies. Next, strategies will be identified to strengthen emergency risk communication planning by looking at the development of an ERC preparedness plan and identifying capacities and capabilities required to achieve this. This will be followed by the application of said findings to simulation scenarios before concluding with a deliberated set of recommendations that can better prepare countries for future Public Health Emergencies.

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The workshop will build on past public health emergencies of international relevance, giving participants the opportunity to hear experts' experiences from the events and further also exchange own experiences from these. The workshop will combine plenary sessions and focussed working groups.

This structure will look to encourage cross-border and cross-sectorial exchange of experiences and knowledge to further strengthen capacities in the three areas.

Outcomes

The workshop looks to allow the exchange of good practices and experience between the EU/EEA and Asia and in the areas of PHE risk communication; PHE preparedness planning and PHE training. A workshop report summarising the key recommendations and conclusions will be developed.

Workshop date and location

The workshop will take place on 7-8 September 2016 in Stockholm, Sweden.



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