Emergency Risk Communication as an integral part of Public Health Preparedness: The role of ECDC

Joint ECDC & ASEF workshop:
How can we be better prepared for the next global health threat? Planning and implementing emergency risk communication.
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What is the European Union?

• 28 Member States
• 24 official languages
• > 500 million inhabitants  
  (per country: 429,000 – 81.2 million)
• €28,700 GDP/capita  
  (per country: 6,100 – 91,600)
• %GDP spent for healthcare  
  varies from approx. 6 to 11%
• A patchwork of cultures
Communicable diseases: a major challenge for Europe

• EU is united in 'diversity'

• Health problems are unevenly distributed across Europe

• So are (public) health capacities

• Economic crisis affects all countries (but some more than others)

• But microbes don’t respect borders

• Furthermore, all Member States need to have the capacity to fulfil international preparedness requirements (IHR & Decision 1082)
Public Health Emergency Preparedness: an operational definition

The capability of the public health and health care systems, communities, and individuals, to prevent, protect against, quickly respond to, and recover from health emergencies, particularly those whose scale, timing, or unpredictability threatens to overwhelm routine capabilities. Preparedness involves a coordinated and continuous process of planning and implementation that relies on measuring performance and taking corrective action.

DECISION No 1082/2013/EU on serious cross-border threats to health

- applies to biological, chemical or environmental threats
- existing rules on preparing for and managing health emergencies will be strengthened
- the Health Security Committee will be given a stronger mandate to react in a crisis

Main objectives

- To ensure adequate level of preparedness planning for all types of serious cross border health threats across the EU
- To include provisions for joint procurement of medical countermeasures
- To provide for risk assessment and risk management for serious cross border health threats from chemical, biological and environmental origin
- To coordinate EU-wide response and avoid duplication with other instruments at EU and international level (eg. IHR)
Elements of Preparedness and Response planning in Decision 1082/2013/EC

• Core capacity standards for preparedness and response planning at national level in accordance with IHR
• Measures and arrangements with other sectors ensuring interoperability
  – coordination structures in place for cross-sectoral incidents;
  – emergency operational centres (crisis centres);
• Business continuity plans
• Revised National Preparedness Plan
Supporting countries in implementing Decision 1082

- Support countries in improving their capacities and plan activities for public health emergency preparedness;
- Foster interoperability in planning for cross-border health threats;
- Promote capabilities and cooperation with other sectors involved in preventing and preparing for cross-border health threats;
- Ensure the continuous cross-border health threats communication among EU, enlargement and ENP countries in the Mediterranean basin.
Emergency Risk Communication in Public Health preparedness

• Significant communication component in all PH events
• Frontline experience: "In the heat of action 10% is science and 90% is communication"
• Lessons learned from 2009 pandemic
• Most public health professionals do not have a communication background
• ERC needs the same (or more) attention in the preparedness cycle as other components
• New challenges with social media
Social media challenges

1. 2-way vs. 1-way communication

2. From top-down to reaching people where they are = resource intense

3. Sometimes underpinning scepticism towards authorities

4. New role models and message amplifiers
Aim of the workshop

To strengthen the link between ERC and PHEP planning underlining the importance of integrating ERC into a PHEP plan.

The workshop will further seek to identify the competencies needed to secure the implementation of ERC within a preparedness plan and see what capacities and capabilities are required to ensure these skills.
Objectives

• 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
Structure of the meeting

• **Day 1**: Setting the scene and reflecting on strengths and challenges in Emergency risk communication. What has gone well / less well in the past

• **Day 2**: How can we strengthen Emergency Risk Communication; focussing on how to integrate into preparedness planning and defining the capacities and capabilities needed (also within the preparedness plan)

• **Outcome**: non-binding conclusions from the participants on how to move forward in the future to further strengthen an integral PHE preparedness plan to include ERC and its capacities and capabilities
Thank you for your attention!