



Korea Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (KCDC) and Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) Joint Event: High-level Meeting on Risk Communications for Public Health Emergencies

14-15 June 2017, Seoul, Korea

Scope & Purpose

Background

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) have partnered to host a multi-country, High-level Meeting focusing on managing risk communications for public health emergencies.

Korea Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC)

KCDC¹ is a Korean governmental agency founded in 2004, developed and organised from the Korea National Institute of Health with a purpose of establishing a safe health management system and administration of more effective disease control. The mission of KCDC is to protect citizens from diseases and create a healthy society, free of disease concerns. In this manner, KCDC continuously works on strengthening its public health emergency response capacity in order to effectively respond to national health emergencies during any new epidemic outbreak. Over time, KCDC has developed a systematic disease control response mechanism through research, investigation, and surveillance of disease.

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Public Health Network

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)², founded in 1997, is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation representing the 53 ASEM³ Partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, plus the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. 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 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, ASEF Public Health Network organised a series of workshops under the project, *Asia-Europe Foundation – Accurate Scenarios Active Preparedness (ASEF-ASAP)*⁴, 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 4 workshops on different aspects of risk communications since 2013. Both the health and non-health sectors across Asia and Europe underlined the need for building capacity for managing communications throughout health crises and for attaining policy and programme support for risk communications.

¹ <http://www.cdc.go.kr/CDC/eng/contents/CdcEngContentView.jsp?cid=17865&menuIds=HOME002-MNU0576-MNU0581>

² <http://www.asef.org>

³ <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/>

⁴ <http://asef.org/pubs/asef-publications/2947-accurate-scenarios-active-preparedness>

Consolidating Political Commitment

In 2016, ASEF Public Health Network together with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) organised a workshop to examine the role of risk communications within public health emergency preparedness planning, and associated challenges in capacity-building efforts. As a result of several discussions, “political interface” was highlighted as an essential factor in achieving effective risk communication. Political support is necessary to protect the public from health threats as well as prevent negative consequences on non-health sectors such as the country’s economy, trade and tourism industry. Furthermore, in an interdependent world, public health incidents may rapidly affect other countries and even trigger emergency crises in other regions, as seen by the example of Ebola outbreak in 2014-2015. It is best to contain possible health emergencies locally at the start, and risk communication plays a key role in preventing further spread; this involves strong political commitment from policy-makers. Nonetheless, gaining such support in timely manner from senior-level officials, especially during times of high-risk and uncertainty, continue to be a challenge.

In 2017, KCDC and ASEF look to jointly host a “*High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergency*” to enhance understanding in tackling the political interface during public health emergencies.

Objectives of the High-level Meeting (June 2017)

The overall aim of this High-level Meeting is to strengthen decision makers’ capacity to support Emergency Risk Communication (ERC) for Public Health Emergencies (PHE). It will look at risk communications as an essential component of crisis management ensuring public communication, internal communication and social engagement. The High-Level Meeting will identify possible obstacles for senior-level officials to make appropriate decisions, and develop strategies to communicate risk to the public before/during/after Public Health Emergencies.

Specific objectives are:

- To recognise the complexity and the role of ERC in a context of crisis management, including its influence beyond the health sector
- To identify difficulties in making decisions and communicating with the public in PHE from high-level officials’ point of view
- To explore and integrate work-flow coordination between high-level officials and their respective ERC spokespersons
- To develop recommendations on actions needed to prepare for future public health events and ERC

Target Audience

The High-level Meeting will address 2 target audiences: 1) senior-level officials who are in a position to make decisions when facing a public health emergency, and 2) government officials in charge of health emergency communication. More specifically:

- Senior-level officials, advisors, and/or other decision-makers from ASEM Partners’ Ministry of Health or equivalent
- Chief/directors of ASEM Partners’ national health agencies or equivalent
- Spokesperson/senior-level media personnel from ASEM Partners’ Ministries of Health or equivalent
- Representatives of international health organisations

Expected outcomes

The High-level Meeting will foster the exchange of good practices in establishing and improving on PHE risk communications processes between Europe and Asia. A meeting report summarising the key recommendations and conclusions will be developed.

Date and location

This High-level Meeting will take place on 14-15 June 2017 in Seoul, Korea.



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