

# High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies: THE ROLE OF RISK COMMUNICATION IN PANDEMICS

19-20 October 2022

Cardiff, Wales (UK) | Hybrid Mode



## Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Public Health Network

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)<sup>1</sup>, founded in 1997, is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation representing the 53 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)<sup>2</sup> Partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, plus the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. Following the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (ASEM FMM9; 2009, Hanoi, Viet Nam). Since then, the two components of the Initiative, ASEM stockpile of anti-viral drugs and personal protective equipment as well as ASEF Public Health Network (ASEF PHN) have contributed to strengthening ASEM Partners’ capacity for managing Public Health Emergencies (PHEs).

## ASEF PHN & Risk Communication for PHEs

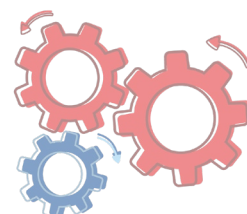
ASEF PHN’s scope is not limited to pandemic influenza – it expands to Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs) as well as Pandemic Preparedness and Response (PPR). ASEF PHN has been working on Risk Communication for PHEs since 2013 as Risk Communication is one of the 13 core capacities defined in the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR)<sup>3</sup>, which all WHO Member States are required to observe<sup>4</sup>. Prior to the pandemic, ASEF PHN implemented a series of High-level Meetings focusing on [Risk Communication & Leadership \(2017\)](#), [How Can We Include Migrants & Ethnic Minorities \(2018\)](#), and [Risk Communication Beyond the Country Borders \(2019\)](#) for effective Risk Communication during PHEs. In 2020, ASEF PHN conducted a research project on [“Monitoring and Evaluation for evidence-based Risk Communication during](#)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.asef.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.asefinfoboard.org/about/partners>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations#tab=tab_1)

<sup>4</sup> [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/190819/WHO\\_HSE\\_GCR\\_2015.13\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=5B20508C33107F767464C601AAD99F62?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/190819/WHO_HSE_GCR_2015.13_eng.pdf;jsessionid=5B20508C33107F767464C601AAD99F62?sequence=1)



the COVID-19 pandemic". In 2021, its first virtual conference focusing on "[Risk Communication during high uncertainty](#)", "[Combatting infodemic & effective use of social media](#)" & "[Increasing vaccine confidence](#)" was implemented. The event brought together senior-level government officials, experts from various international organisations, and civil society stakeholders to share good practices and lessons learnt on risk communication across Asia and Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Public Health Wales

Public Health Wales is the national public health body in Wales. Established in 2009, it is one of the 11 organisations which make up NHS Wales.

With our partners across government, third sector and local communities we aim to reduce inequalities, increase healthy life expectancy and improve health and wellbeing for everyone in Wales, now and for future generations.

Together, our teams work to prevent disease, protect health and provide specialist expertise.

We are the primary source of trusted public health information, independent expertise and world-class research and innovation, to help everyone in Wales live healthier lives.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Health Wales worked in close partnership with Welsh Government, UK Central Government, Local Government agencies and the national health service to support the population in Wales with accurate, timely and relevant risk communications.

## The Role of Risk Communication in Pandemics

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)<sup>5</sup> under the IHR. On March 11 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was labelled a global pandemic.<sup>6</sup> Since then, no country has remained untouched and Risk Communication has been playing an essential part in pandemic response.

In 2022, ASEF PHN and Public Health Wales will jointly organise a high-level meeting on "Risk Communication for PHEs: The Role of Risk Communication in Pandemics". Since every country has had to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting aims to cover the common challenges faced by ASEM Partners while implementing risk communication. Topics on the agenda include but are not limited to: dealing with the politics of implementing risk communication; including migrants and ethnic minorities; communicating uncertainty; addressing the COVID-19 infodemic; effectively using social media; tackling vaccine hesitancy; translating science into action; and fostering two-way risk communication.

## Objectives

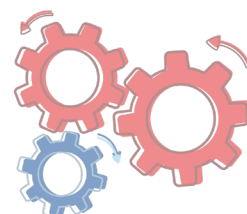
The overall aim of the high-level meeting is to strengthen countries' capacity to support Risk Communication for PHEs. It intends to provide a platform for the bi-regional exchange of best practices and lessons learnt related to Risk Communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Specific objectives of the meeting are:

- To address the challenges in Risk Communication identified during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To facilitate networking among Risk Communication practitioners across Asia and Europe, enabling the exchange of best Risk Communication practices and lessons learnt; and
- To determine the areas of international/intersectoral collaboration to improve Risk Communication for future public health emergencies.

<sup>5</sup> [https://extranet.who.int/sph/sites/default/files/document-library/document/FS15A\\_IHR\\_COVID19\\_EN\\_MAY\\_2020.pdf](https://extranet.who.int/sph/sites/default/files/document-library/document/FS15A_IHR_COVID19_EN_MAY_2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>



## Target Audience

The high-level meeting will aim to include the following audiences: i) Government officials in charge of health emergencies and emergency risk communication; ii) Government officials from sectors other than health that are involved in the COVID-19 pandemic response; and iii) representatives from civil society, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), International Organisations (IOs) and academia. More specifically, the meeting intends to reach:

- Senior-level officials, advisors and/or other decisionmakers from ASEM Partners' Ministries of Health or equivalent;
- Spokespersons/senior-level media personnel from ASEM Partners' Ministries of Health or equivalent;
- Senior-level officials, advisors and/or other decisionmakers from ASEM Partners' Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Tourism, and other related Ministries;
- Representatives of NGOs, IOs and academics whose work is related to Risk Communication and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Expected Outcomes

The high-level meeting will foster the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic in establishing and improving Risk Communication processes in Asia and Europe.

The outcome of the meeting will be summarised in a short report containing the key recommendations and/or in the form of a toolkit.

## About the Joint High-level Meeting

This high-level meeting will use a conference application, 'Whova', to facilitate active discussion before/during/after the meeting among both in-person and online participants. This event is via invitation only – participants are required to register prior to the meeting, regardless of the mode of participation.



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