



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health

Crisis management and preparedness in Health

Annex 1 - Policy expectations for a Joint Action to strengthen preparedness in the EU against serious cross-border threats to health and support the implementation of the International Health Regulations

At EU level, Commission Decision 1082/2013/EU provides the framework to improve preparedness and to strengthen the response capacities to health emergencies of biological, chemical, environmental and unknown origin across the EU. It aims at ensuring adequate coordination between EU Member States to achieve a consistent level of preparedness and the highest level of interoperability between national preparedness plans. In addition, it is an instrument at EU level to support the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR).

This Joint Action has the aim to strengthen preparedness including laboratory capacities and the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR in the EU¹). Activities are expected to improve preparedness and response planning for serious cross-border threats to health. The work is part of a wider approach to strengthen the resilience and response capacities of health systems, and to ensure coherence and interoperability between relevant sectors for preparedness and response to health threats at EU and Member States' levels.

The Joint Action is expected to build upon the outcomes of the 2017 reporting exercise on the state of play with preparedness and response planning under Decision 1082/2013/EU, and other sources of external or self-assessments of IHR capacities. It should follow up on the Joint Action EMERGE on 'Efficient response to highly dangerous and emerging pathogens at EU level' (2015-2018) and closely collaborate with the Joint Action "Healthy Gateways on preparedness and action at points of entry" to be launched in 2018, and should consider links and complementarity relevant EU policies and initiatives.

Activities under this Joint Action are expected to:

1.) **Strengthen preparedness and the implementation of IHR**, in particular through improving cross-sectoral preparedness and response capacity in Member States, developing standard operating procedures, business continuity plans, and promoting the interoperability of national preparedness planning. The Joint Action will support the planning and implementation and of targeted actions, and sharing best practices or lessons learnt from response to recent outbreaks, exercises and workshops to help Member States' full implementation of core capacity standards in accordance with the IHR in view of the EU and the global emergency preparedness context. A strong EU focus on the increasing level of security threats of biological and chemical origin, and targeted actions in health preparedness and response, strengthening information exchange and cross-sectoral response, through mechanisms for rapid mobilisation of resources and medical countermeasures across borders are important areas towards achieving a high level of health protection in Europe.

¹ Examples of activities listed under the Health Programme Annual Work Programme 2018

2.) **Strengthen laboratory preparedness in Member States** and to develop their capacities to detect, investigate and report potential cross-border threats to health or public health emergencies of international concern, such as disease outbreaks. Responsive and state-of-the-art laboratory services capable of producing reliable results in a timely manner are a cornerstone of any country's capacity to investigate such events. Despite significant advances in laboratory capacity in recent years, in many countries reliable confirmation of suspected infectious diseases is hindered by a lack of standardized methods, suitably trained staff or other structural challenges.

Under this Joint Action, activities to strengthen laboratory preparedness in Member States cover in particular the coordination of a network of European microbiology laboratories for highly pathogenic agents with the aim to strengthen laboratory preparedness and supporting less-equipped Member States through technological transfer. Moreover, the network shall standardise common diagnostic procedures, conduct regular External Quality Assessments for highly pathogenic agents and provide practical training to staff.

Under IHR it is a minimum requirement to have the necessary capacities and be ready to respond to health threats. This Joint Action will further develop core capacities and increase standards in Member States in this respect. The overarching goal is to strengthen IHR implementation and preparedness, to support capacity building and to contribute to a high level of protection of health and security in EU Member States in line with the EU health security framework. The Joint Action includes improving EU Member State coordination as regards different global initiatives, and in particular the WHO's IHR draft 5-year Global Implementation Plan, the elements of the IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and implementation of the Health Emergencies Programme.