



Bio-preparedness in the European Union

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“The most important under-addressed threat relating to terrorism, and one which acutely requires new thinking on the part of the international community, is that of terrorists using a biological weapon”

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the
United Nations, 27 April 2006

Common challenges across Europe

Biological security threat differs from a natural hazard in the overall sense that there are human intention and planning involved, and thus poses new challenges for which expertise especially in public health and public security are needed.

EU Programme of Cooperation in Preparedness and Response to Biological and Chemical Agent Attacks (Health Security)

Four Objectives:

- Mechanism for information exchange, consultation and co-ordination
- Capability for inventorying, surveillance, detection/diagnosis and identification
- Medicines' stocks and health services database and stand-by facilities for provision of medicines, other medical resources and health care specialists
- Binding rules and guidance, links with third countries and international organisations.

These four objectives comprise 25 actions.

EU Health Security Committee

- The EU Health Ministers created the Health Security Committee on 26 October 2001; the Committee had its first meeting on 30 October 2001;
- The Committee has as its mandate to take decisions and commitments with respect to preparedness planning and response in case of emergency;
- It is composed of high level representatives of the EU Health Ministers and the European Commission.

EU Health Security Programme: Achievements

- Rapid Alert System for Biological and Chemical Attacks and Threats (RAS BICHAT);
- List of biological agents that might be used for terrorist attacks;
- Platform for laboratory cooperation;
- Clinical guidelines for case recognition and management (twelve adopted and published);
- European Medicines Evaluation Agency's guidance on medicines and vaccines for treatment;
- Improved inter-operability of emergency plans;
- Modelling of outbreaks and sharing of data for simulations;
- Directory of experts for interventions-assistance.

Generic Preparedness and Response Planning (COM (2005) 605)

- **Information management** (surveillance, monitoring, intelligence, sampling, detection, diagnosis, analysis, correlation, identification)
- **Communications** (systems, procedures, command and control, obligations for information and consultation, media, expert groups, public)
- **Scientific advice** (procurement, setting criteria and triggers in support of actions, determine corresponding actions and the resources and ways to implement them)
- **Cross-sector preparedness**

EU Health Security Programme: Achievements

(continued)

- EU wide exercises to test communication systems and preparedness planning;
- Membership in the Global Health Security Initiative of the G7+ partners.

Priority Items for the future Work on Health Security

- Decision by the Health Ministers on the future mandate and scope of work of the Health Security Committee;
- Further follow-up of generic preparedness planning for health sector crisis response in the Community;
- Further exercises to test communication channels, interoperability of emergency plans and coordination of response measures across the EU for crisis response;
- Further follow-up of the Health Security Programme.