



Lead Partner

- Public Health England, Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE), Oxfordshire UK.

Associate Partners

- Universitaetsmedizin Goettingen, Georg-August-Universitaet, GIZ-Nord Poisons Centre, Goettingen, Germany (UMG-GOE).
- Swedish Defence Research Agency, CBRN Defence and Security, Sweden (FOI).
- National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Netherlands (RIVM).
- Empresa Publica De Emergencias Sanitarias, Spain (EPES).

Collaborating partners

- Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Centre (American Association of Poison Control Centres AAPCC)
- National Institute of Health (Istituto Superiore di Sanita), NHI (ISS), Rome, Italy
- National Centre for Public Health, Moldova
- Stockholm Pre-hospital Centre, Sweden
- National Institute of Public Health, Slovenia
- University of Thessaly, Greece (on behalf of the SHIPSAN ACT, EU funded project)
- European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT)

The European Chemical Emergency Network 'ECHEMNET'



For further information or if you would like to become a collaborating partner, please contact echemnet@phe.gov.uk

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Overview

There is a mixed ability to respond to serious chemical incidents in the European Union (EU), especially where those incidents have the potential to be of cross-border significance. For events affecting or with the potential to affect public health, there are a number of legal requirements that have been put in place to notify neighbouring countries of incidents that may have a wide health impact and to facilitate mutual sharing of information between countries (e.g. through the International Health Regulations; IHR 2005).

The European Parliament and the Council of European Union (EU Council) adopted a Decision (1082/2013/EU) on serious cross border threats to health, which came into force on the 5 November 2013. The Decision sets provisions on notification, ad-hoc monitoring and coordination of public health measures following serious cross border threats to health from biological, chemical, environmental events as well as events that have an unknown origin.

RASCHEM

Efforts to develop a European notification system to promote a rapid response to a chemical event have been successful, with the production of the rapid alerting system for chemicals (RASCHEM) which went live on 19th June 2014. RASCHEM has been developed along with a set of guidance documents for the operation of the platform and to support the assessment of emerging events by platform users. These guidance documents will be tested in exercises and reiterated so that they can be easily used by EU MSs for the assessment of chemical incidents of potential cross-border significance..

ECHEMNET

An objective of the ECHEMNET project is to set up an EU-level network of expert chemical health risk assessors who have experience in dealing with the acute phase of chemical incidents. The project will also ensure that experience of, and best practices adopted by, one Member State following an incident benefit other Member States and that the response to such incidents is complementary to that of other sectors and actors (e.g. the EU Civil Protection Mechanism; CPM; World Health Organization, WHO; and the European Centre for Disease Control, ECDC). It will also enable an efficient and coherent EU-level response to potentially devastating cross-border events through the consistent use of RASCHEM (e.g. in assigning alert levels), whilst avoiding duplication of effort (e.g. by cross posting to the Early Warning System for Communicable Diseases and Outbreak of Unknown Aetiology (EWRS) and other rapid alerting systems).

This ECHEMNET may be of particular value for Member States with less capacity and expertise to respond to chemical events. ECHEMNET will support the implementation of the EU Decision on Serious Cross Border Threats to Health as well as the WHO International Health Regulations by describing and testing a well-defined and robust mechanism to trigger risk assessment and coordination of public health measures for transboundary chemical public health threats in the European Union.

Specific Objectives

- To consolidate existing guidance documents and procedures for coordinated risk assessment of cross-border incidents and prepare the proposed documents for endorsement and usage.
- To engage with end-users and stakeholders to ensure the guidance documents and network are robust and fit-for-purpose.
- To further develop a sustainable network of public health risk assessors to respond to emerging cross-border incidents.
- To produce and test worked examples of potential chemical threats via the network of assessors
- To engage with EU Directorates and relevant competent authorities with a civil emergencies response function to ensure greater harmonisation of inter-sectoral response.

Expected Outcomes

- The project outputs will ensure that experiences and best practices can be shared between Member States and that the approach is complementary to other sectors.
- The project outcomes will enable an efficient and coherent EU-level response to potentially devastating cross-border events through the pilot network, consistent use of RASCHEM and the use of standardised guidance on chemical incident management.
- The approach is expected to be of particular value for Member States with less capacity and expertise to respond to national chemical events as well as the EU and Member States during a transnational incident.
- The project will support the implementation of the EU Decision for Serious Cross Border Threats to Health and International Health Regulations by describing and testing a well-defined and robust mechanism to trigger risk assessment and coordination of public health measures for transboundary chemical public health threats in the European Union.