



Luxembourg 1 June 2011  
D(2011)

## Summary Note

### AUDIO CONFERENCE ON THE SHIGA TOXIN-PRODUCING *E. COLI* (STEC) OUTBREAK AND NECESSARY FOLLOW-UP

1 JUNE 2011, 14:00 – 15:45

### Audio Conference

**CHAIR:** Head of Unit SANCO C/3, Health Threats, for points 1 and 3 of the agenda;  
Head of Unit SANCO G/4, Food, Alert System and Training, for point 2 of the agenda

**PARTICIPANTS:** EWRS contact points, RASFF contact points, SANCO C3, G4, ECDC, EFSA, EU Reference Laboratory for STEC, WHO EURO,

#### Objective of the meeting:

DG SANCO organised this special audio conference on the Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) outbreak in Germany to provide update of the situation and investigations ongoing in the Member States since the last meeting of 31 May.

#### 1. Update of the epidemiological situation

SANCO informed on three messages received today concerning the situation:

- An epidemiological report from the Robert Koch Institute (1 June 2011).
- A case definition of HUS from Germany this afternoon through the EWRS
- A table with number of HUS cases circulated on ECDC website

**The German EWRS contact point**, represented by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), gave an update on the epidemiological situation as follows:

1064 reported enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC) (including 4 deaths) and 470 reported haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) cases (including 9 deaths); 71% of the HUS cases are female. 78% of reported HUS cases come from 4 Federal States (Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen).

For the surveillance of the patients with bloody diarrhoea in intensive care units (ICU) 27 hospitals submitted data. 8 of them are in the epidemic area. Ratio EHEC:HUS cases is 3:1.

There are delays in notification and reporting. No evidence that the number of cases is decreasing. One would need to wait at least for another three days before one could draw conclusions as regards a change in trend.

**The Danish EWRS contact point** declared no new cases. There are still a total of 14 STEC cases from which 7 cases are diagnosed with HUS.

**The Dutch EWRS contact point** reported 4 HUS cases from which one has been confirmed with serotype 0104.

**The Swedish EWRS contact point** reported 43 confirmed STEC cases of which 15 have developed HUS; for 3 cases have been confirmed with serotype 0104. All these cases are related to travel in Germany.

**The Norwegian EWRS contact point** declared no new cases; still one suspected case; the person did not travel to Germany but received a visitor from the Northern Part of Germany during the incubation period.

**The Portuguese EWRS contact point** declared no cases so far. She indicated that because there is still no trend of decrease in numbers of cases that can be recognised one might have suspicion of deliberate release of an agent.

**The chairman** replied that DG SANCO had addressed this question to Europol; no information was available on the issue at that time; DG SANCO would contact Europol again on this point.

**The Irish EWRS contact point** mentioned that the current situation would be a useful opportunity to consider intentional release of an agent; one could see if the communication lines with the sectors dealing with deliberate releases are good.

**The Italian EWRS contact point** declared no suspected cases. Furthermore he regarded deliberate release as being rather unlikely. STEC: 0104 is a very specific strain which would be difficult to disseminate intentionally.

**The UK EWRS contact point** announced that updated information on the number of cases will be communicated tomorrow.

**The RKI** mentioned concerning death cases that the numbers indicated are those reported through the mandatory German reporting system (9 HUS and 4 EHEC); there might be a delay in reporting compared to communication by the press; therefore figures can differ. Furthermore reporting and transmission delays for communicating EHEC cases within the German national notification system are supposed to be longer than for HUS cases.

**The ECDC** informed that they provided to DG SANCO a synoptic overview on the HUS cases (EHEC cases are not reported). They will circulate a new model for reporting by Member States; it will be subdivided into STEC and HUS cases. They also sent an EU case definition for HUS and public health advice which they developed jointly with EFSA.

**The Swiss representative** asked if, for the time of the current STEC / HUS outbreak, Switzerland could get granted access to the EWRS, alternatively the daily updated overview on STEC / HUS cases by ECDC be circulated to them.

**The chairman** replied that DG SANCO would come back to the Swiss representative for clarifying the question bilaterally; in any case the daily overview by ECDC on the number of cases is also made publicly available at the ECDC website.

## 2. Investigation into the source of infection

The Commission asked the German authorities for more details on the links to the Spanish cucumbers.

**DE, Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL):** Germany provided an update. However during the meeting new information became available from the DE national reference laboratory. The current situation is as follows:

Reference	No	STEC	0104	Origin
RASFF 0703	2 samples	STEC pos.	neg	ES
RASFF 0702	1 sample	STEC neg.	neg	ES
RASFF 0707	1 sample	STEC neg	neg	DK or NL

Germany informed that in contradiction with information provided yesterday, no further samples are STEC positive.

1150 samples are registered (as of yesterday), of which 520 targeted cucumbers, tomatoes and leave salad.

Commission expresses its concerns about the low numbers of total samples. The newly developed PCR methods should enable more rapid and more numerous processing of samples. The central competent authorities are asked to provide up-to-date figures of the number of samples, also for example on those samples targeted at identified outbreak-restaurants etc.

Further information was requested by different Member States as regards analyses on water and other pathways.

BVL Germany promised to provide detailed information on the analyses from suspected places where patients consumed food.

It was requested to Germany to proceed with sampling and analyses, on one hand focussing on samples where faecal contamination had been demonstrated, on the other hand with a open mind keeping all possible sources open as no link has been demonstrated with certainty to certain food.

It was also requested to provide an overview of all tests results.

### **3. Conclusions and next steps**

The chairman informed that there will take place two meetings at EU level next week at which the STEC outbreak is on the agenda:

- The Health Council in Luxemburg on 6 - 7 June;
- The Plenary Session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 7 June.

He announced that the next audio-conference will be held tomorrow, 2 June, starting at 14:00 CEST; in addition to information exchange on the epidemiological situation and the source of infection the following items will be on the agenda:

- Discussion on an EU case definition for haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) which ECDC has set-up;
- Public health advice on prevention of STEC, VTEC and EHEC which ECDC has developed, in collaboration with EFSA.