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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management
Crisis management and preparedness in health

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Audio meeting of the Health Security Committee - 5 March 2019

Public Flash report

Current measles outbreak in Val Thorens (France) and the North Kivu and Ituri Ebola outbreak (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Chair: Wolfgang Philipp, Head of Unit, SANTE C3

Audio participants: AT, BE, CZ, DK, DE, EL ES, FR, IT, LT, LV, LU, NO, NL, MT, SE, UK, DG RTD, ECDC, WHO Euro and HQ.

Apologies: DG ECHO.

The Chair welcomed the members of the Health Security Committee (HSC) as well as representatives from RTD, WHO, and ECDC. The Chair presented the agenda in order to discuss the ongoing outbreak of measles in the EU/EEA, in particular response measures and international contact tracing procedures, and an update on the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

No further points were added to the agenda.

1. Measles outbreaks in the EU/EEA, response measures and contact tracing

Measles cases continue to increase in a number of EU/EEA countries. In 2018, 36 deaths have been reported in EU countries. Vaccination coverage is below 95% in most countries. The ongoing measles transmission in EU/EEA is being monitored through the Communicable Disease Threat Report (CDTR) and Round Table Reports produced by the ECDC; the latest Rapid Risk Assessment was published in March 2018. Due to the fact that measles continues to spread across Europe, there is a need of coordination of response among Member States.

ECDC gave a short situation update. At the moment, ECDC reports over 12 000 cases of measles in the EU/EEA over the past year, with the largest number of cases reported by FR, IT, EL, RO, UK, SK and DE. 29% of cases were children under five years and 53% were aged 15 years or older. The number of measles cases reported to TESSy may be an underestimation in certain cases. In 2019, Measles shows a seasonal transmission and during the last 5 months half of the number of cases reported last year occurred.

France updated on the recently notified measles outbreak in Val Thorens (a ski resort). Starting February 2019, there have been cases of measles possibly related to this outbreak reported by DK, UK and BE. French authorities enforced a local vaccination campaign in the living areas of seasonal workers. A communication campaign was set up to inform national tourists of the need to update their vaccination status before arrival in the area. Tourism organisations and booking centres were involved to ensure that this recommendation was widely disseminated.

France suggested a coordinated communication campaign on measles and vaccination across the EU, and closer collaboration on contact tracing procedures.

Member States experiencing recent measles outbreaks or cases related to the French outbreak reported about their response measures and contact tracing procedures.

DG SANTE reported on ongoing work on contact tracing procedures within the Commission and with the HSC Working Group on Preparedness. An EU workshop with public health authorities and transport sector may be envisaged as necessary.

- DG SANTE will monitor the situation closely with ECDC and with the other Commission services and provide updates to the HSC and through EWRS as necessary.
- DG SANTE will share relevant materials (risk communication; legislation) shared by Member States with the HSC.
- Risk communication coordination will further discussed at the upcoming HSC Communicators Network meeting (8 March 2019).
- Further work on the coordination of contact tracing procedures will be carried forward by the HSC Working Group on Preparedness (29 March 2019). An EU workshop with public health authorities and transport sector may be envisaged as necessary.
- The HSC will be kept updated on any relevant development and future HSC meetings may be organised to address the measles outbreaks.

2. Update on the Ebola outbreak in DRC – North Kivu and Ituri

The current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been ongoing since 11 May 2018 and as of 2 March 2019, there have been 894 Ebola virus disease cases, of which 829 confirmed and 65 probable, including 561 deaths. Furthermore, on 25 February 2019, a major violent incident in Katwa health zone occurred leading to the total destruction of the Ebola treatment center (ETC) in the area. On 27 February 2019, an additional violent attack took place at the ETC in Butembo health zone.

ECDC offered a short update of the current situation regarding the treatments centres. The response operations are facing security issues and there are delays in the contact tracing and communications operations. The overall risk of introduction and further spread of Ebola virus disease within the EU/EEA remains very low. However, the risk can only be eliminated by stopping transmission at the local level.

WHO updated on the situation on the ground and reported that issues related to infection prevention and control, despite specialists deployment and due to security concerns. As regards vaccination, around 85 000 people have been vaccinated in DRC since the start of the outbreak. Vaccination of healthcare workers is underway in Uganda and South

Sudan. Preparedness activities are ongoing in several countries, including Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, but also Congo, Angola, Republic of South Africa.

- DG SANTE will monitor the situation closely with ECDC and with the other Commission services and provide updates to the HSC and through EWRS as necessary.
- A SOP for medical evacuation of Healthcare and Humanitarian workers will soon be finalised between SANTE/ECHO/WHO and Member States will be informed.

3. AOB

No issues raised.

SANTE thanked participants and closed the meeting.