Audio meeting of the Health Security Committee – 17 January 2020

Public Flash report

the cluster of pneumonia cases associated with novel Coronavirus in Wuhan, China

Chair: Wolfgang Philipp, SANTE C3

Audio participants: AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, ISL, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, SI, ECDC, DG RTD, DG ECHO, WHO Euro, WHO HQ, EMA (57 people participated)

The Chair welcomed the Members of the Health Security Committee (HSC) as well as representatives from ECDC, WHO and DG RTD. The Chair presented the agenda and noted that the audio meeting was convened to discuss the outbreak of pneumonia associated with a novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China.

No further points were added to the agenda.

1. Risk assessment on cluster of pneumonia cases associated with novel coronavirus – Wuhan, China

The Chair presented the background of the current cluster of pneumonia cases associated with a novel coronavirus.

On 31 December 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health and Health Commission informed about a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown aetiology with a common exposure in Wuhan’s South China Seafood City market, indicating a possible exposure link to animals.

As of 22nd of January, more than 440 cases are laboratory confirmed cases infected with a novel (or new) coronavirus (2019-nCoV). 9 fatalities are reported who had chronic and severe underlying conditions died. Human-to-human transmission has been confirmed by the Chinese National Health Commission on 20 January. Several cases have been reported outside of Wuhan (Shanghai, Beijing, other provinces) and outside of China, including in 3 Thailand, 1 in Japan, 1 in South Korea and yesterday evening the first case in Seattle, US.

WHO is holding an IHR Emergency Committee on 22nd of January to discuss whether this coronavirus constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

Following this event, exit screening has been implemented at Wuhan’s international airport, as well as entry screening in neighbouring territories (Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia,
Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the US, Vietnam, Russia, Vietnam, Australia). The airport of Wuhan has direct flight connections with some EU countries (France, the UK and Italy).

The US CDC has activated its Emergency Operations Centre to better provide ongoing support to the 2019-nCoV response, and began implementing public health entry screening at San Francisco (SFO), New York (JFK), and Los Angeles (LAX) airports. This week CDC will add entry health screening at two more airports - Atlanta (ATL) and Chicago O’Hare (ORD).

The ECDC updated on their Rapid Risk Assessment of 22nd of January:

- The potential impact of 2019-nCoV outbreak is **high**
- Further global spread is **likely**
- For travellers visiting Wuhan : the likelihood of infection is **moderate**
- For cases being important to countries with the greatest volume of people traveling to and from Wuhan : the likelihood is **moderate**
- For detection of imported cases in the EU/EEA : the likelihood is **moderate**
- For secondary infection by a reported case, under appropriate infection prevention and control practices are adhered to : likelihood is **low**.

ECDC emphasized that many elements are still unknown: no epidemiological curve has been shared (with data description of cases), the source of exposure is unclear (potential second market), the extent of the zoonotic transmission is unknown.

WHO anticipates seeing cases in the EU, raised that critical questions remain on the transmissability and clarified that WHO is developing guidance for preparedness.

The Chair thanked ECDC and WHO for their update and recalled that on the 9th of January 2020, DG SANTE opened an alert notification on the EWRS where most Member States have since been sharing information on response and communication measures. Member States are reminded to use the new incident management module, which was specifically developed to provide comprehensive information on response measures, which is available to all MS real-time.

The Chair opened the discussion using the guiding questions shared ahead of the meeting.

On case definition and reporting, ECDC shared that WHO published case definitions on their website, for suspected, probable and confirmed cases. ECDC clarified that a case definition for EU region is being discussed with WHO EURO, and will be shared as soon as agreed.

FR, ES, NO explained that their case definition in use is similar to the one presented by ECDC.

IT, IS, NL, NO, FR explained that 2019-nCoV cases are notifiable at the national level.

On **response measures and specifically travel advice for travellers to Wuhan**, several countries do not advice against any non-essential travel. IT on the other hand, is considering to recommend postponing non-essential travel to Wuhan.
On **response measures for countries with direct flights**, **FR** updated the HSC on the implementation of reinforced information on the plane for travellers with flyers. No entry screening is in place and is not intended for the moment.

**UK** reported through email that no entry screening is expected to be put in place in the UK, but reinforced communication to airlines and travellers is in place.

**IT** has implemented entry screening in Rome Fiumicino and Milan Malpensa (connecting indirect flights), Procedures for collecting information from passengers have been enhanced.

For **other countries** without direct flights to Wuhan: **ES** emphasized that for now, they consider no need for specific action. **AT** and **CZ** report intense media interest in potential measures at Points of Entry (PoE) and asked the HSC on further actions and advice.

The **CHAIR** reminded the HSC that the **Joint Action HEALTHY GATEWAYS** is working on guidance for Points of Entry screening to be shared on Thursday 23rd, which will be useful for the MS in their decision making process.

**DG RTD** noted that they are considering and discussing the mobilization of emergency fund and that the PREPARE project has activated their response mode will help to assess operational readiness in the networks, identify important knowledge and resources gaps and prepared clinical protocols.

**DG ECHO** is monitoring the situation and will share updates on a daily.

2. **Next Steps**

The **CHAIR** summarized the meeting and mentioned that:

- The ECDC
  - will update the risk assessments regularly,
  - will develop leaflets with basic information on advice for travellers, to the public and health professionals
  - Has updated RAGIDA Guidelines for contact tracing and shared on the ECDC website to include 2019-nCoV.
  - Is developing an EU case definition with WHO EURO. Once this is available the Commission will agree with the ECDC on a case reporting mechanism.

- Member States are asked to further
  - share travel advice
  - report on measures or plans regarding entry screening, or other measures at entry points
  - inform in writing on clinical management capacities available (stocks of antivirals, shortages), dedicated hospitals (isolation facilities, respiratory treatment, PPE) etc.

- **DG SANTE** will
  - discuss with EASA on information exchange related to air traffic/contact tracing as well as with air flight operators to share incoming airlines passenger data timely
  - provide guidelines for entry screening, mapping laboratory and other capacities to the HSC from 23 January onwards

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1 [https://www.prepare-europe.eu/News/News-items/ID/1209](https://www.prepare-europe.eu/News/News-items/ID/1209)
- Circulate a survey on preparedness on capacities, including capacities to manage nCoV, based on survey developed by ECDC.
- Continue to closely monitor the developments with ECDC and WHO, regularly update the HSC and convene the HSC to coordinate preparedness and responses as necessary.

The **CHAIR** reminded Participants to share their response measures and documentations on the EWRS and to share answers to the guiding questions through email to allow a complete mapping of state of preparedness and response plans.

The **CHAIR** reminded participants that a HSC Communicators Network will take place Thursday 23rd at 10am.

The **CHAIR** thanked participants and closed the meeting.