

Citizens' summary

Dealing with major public-health threats – EU policy paper

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- The EU can help protect the European public from major public-health threats: **infectious diseases** (including the new pandemic flu virus H1N1), **chemical and radioactive contaminants** in products and in the wider environment, **biological weapons** (e.g. anthrax), etc.
- Protection involves **prevention** where possible and an **effective, rapid response** once a disaster has struck.
- The EU policy paper on health security describes arrangements for protecting the public from health threats. It assigns the EU Health Security Committee primary responsibility for coordination at the EU level and names the European Commission as the EU representative in the [Global Health Security Initiative](#).

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **EU countries** – would benefit from increased international cooperation. As the EU strategy on health security develops and EU-wide communication systems become operational, the countries of Europe can respond quicker and better to public health disasters.
- **EU citizens** – would be better protected against risks and hazards to public health.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- Diseases do not respect national borders, and a new infectious disease can spread across the world's continents as fast as an airplane can fly. European cooperation is vital in dealing with emerging threats such as the H1N1 flu virus.
- In a global economy, consumer goods and foods cross borders all the time. Contaminated products are likely to affect citizens in many countries.
- The EU is ideally placed to coordinate European health security efforts.
- European networks of experts and researchers are great sources of knowledge, offering individual countries more resources than they would have access to on their own.
- At times of crisis, the worst affected countries should be able to count on support from other EU countries.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- Late 2009.

Data for search engines	
Title tag (<i>± 70 characters with spaces</i>)	Protection from public-health threats in the EU and internationally – policy paper

Description (<i>± 150 characters</i>)	EU health security paper with overview of EU and international efforts and challenges ahead.
Link name (<i>max. 5 words</i>)	EU health-security policy paper
Keywords (for url/filename)	Health security, bio-terrorism, CBRN, public-health threats, HSC, Health Security Committee, Global Health Security Initiative, GHSI