

Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER)

Mandate for an Opinion on

Ad hoc rapid risk assessment

1. Background

Decision 1082/2013/EU on serious cross border threats to health¹ lays down rules on epidemiological surveillance, monitoring, early warning of, and combating serious cross border threats to health. Following an alert notification in the Early Warning and Response system (EWRS), risk assessment of the potential severity of the threat to public health shall be carried out. In cases when risk assessment does not fall under the mandate of a relevant EU Agency (e.g. European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control or European Food Safety authority), the Commission shall (upon request of Health Security Committee or on its own initiative) provide an *ad hoc* risk assessment.

According to the Commission Decision C(2015) 5383² the mission of the Scientific Committees is to provide the Commission services with scientific advice and risk assessment in the areas of public health, consumer safety and environmental risks. According to Article 3 of this Commission Decision, 'the Commission services may also request the Committees to provide rapid risk advice on the state of scientific knowledge concerning specific risks in case of urgent risks'.

To date the Scientific Committees have been used by the Commission to provide scientific opinions on chronic health issues (e.g. mercury in dental amalgam or risks to human health of use of chemicals in fertilisers).

In order to be able to carry out the risk assessment of serious cross-border chemical threats, it will be important to put in place a procedure for providing a rapid risk assessment during chemical, biological and environmental emergencies within a short time-frame (36 hours).

In the 'Rules of Procedures of the Scientific Committees (April 2013)³', relevant procedures are laid down concerning Rapid advice and Accelerated Procedure (page 19-20) which could be used also for the case of rapid risk assessment as defined by the Commission Decision 1082/2013. However, an analysis of these procedures is needed to better fine tune them to specific needs of such rapid risk assessment.

2. Terms of reference

The SCHER is required by the Commission to develop a procedure for *ad-hoc* rapid risk assessment of serious cross border chemical threats.

In the development of such a procedure, the SCHER should take into consideration

- The procedures already in place (Rapid Advice and Accelerated Procedure in the 'Rules of Procedures').
- the knowledge available and experience gained at the EU level, e.g. projects funded under the EU Health Programme (ASHT⁴ and ECHEMNET⁵) which aimed to provide support the Commission and to the EU Member States to comply with the Decision 1082/2013 on serious cross border threats to health.

In particular, the procedure should comprise

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/preparedness_response/docs/decision_serious_crossborder_threats_22102013_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/docs/call_2015_5383_decision_with_annexes_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/docs/rules_procedure_2013_en.pdf

⁴ <http://www.asht.eu/>

⁵ <http://echemnet.eu/>

- Description of the tasks to be performed, the actors involved and the timeline;
- interaction among Commission services, the relevant Scientific Committee and other EU or international bodies involved;
- line of command among different parties involved in the exercise,
- validation procedures should be specified.

Recommendations on key elements and critical points to be considered when performing rapid risk assessment should also be included in the opinion.

3. Deadline

The limit to produce this opinion is March 2016.