

Tool kit for Health/Communication Managers and Staff involved in daily communication activities

Resource: Country information sheet - PORTUGAL

Objective: Provide a general overview of the Portuguese context in terms of levels of responsibility and entities involved in the management of health crisis.

Levels of responsibility in crisis management

• **National level:** the **Directorate-General for Health** (DGS, Direcção Geral de Saúde) is a Ministry of Health service with autonomous administration. It is a reference organism for those who act on the field of health. Some of its areas of intervention in the context of a health crisis are:

- Coordinate and ensure the epidemiological vigilance at national level, in collaboration with other EU Member States and international organisations;
- Coordinate the Emergency System in Public Health;
- Coordinate the activity of the Ministry of Health regarding European and International Relations;

DGS is managed by a General Director, assisted by two Assistant General Directors, and has several units. The two units illustrated below are particularly relevant in the context of health crisis:

Support Unit for the National Health Authority and Management of Emergencies in Public Health (*Unidade de Apoio à Autoridade de Saúde Nacional e à Gestão de Emergências em Saúde Pública*)

Some of its competences include:

Assure the prompt intervention of the State when something puts at risk national health/citizens health safety.

Coordinate the evaluation of threats for the national health, and collaborate in the risk management with other DGS units, national and international institutions, to ensure an appropriate response.

Ensure communication flows when national or international alerts emerge, including receiving, analysing and issuing notifications to various alert systems.

Directorate of Services for Coordination of International Relations (*Direcção de Serviços de Coordenação nas Relações Internacionais*)

Some of its competences include:

Coordinate the interventions of the services and organisations of the Ministry of Health when it comes to European and International affairs, and its articulation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as other Public Administration departments and entities in similar areas as the Ministry of Health.

Coordinate the national implementation of EU policies.

The **INEM (National Institute for Medical Emergency - Instituto Nacional de Emergência Médica)** is the organization of the Ministry of Health responsible for the **coordination and functioning of an integrated medical emergency system (SIEM – Sistema Integrado de Emergência Médica)**.

This system ensures fast and appropriate delivery of emergency health care. The SIEM includes a dedicated team with specialized human resources, medical equipment, health related activities and procedures, covering every aspect of an emergency situation, since the support where the emergency situation takes place until the moment the patient arrives to the most appropriate medical unit, in order to receive treatment, coordinating every participant in the operation.

Several public authorities also participate in the SIEM, such as the **Portuguese Public Safety Police (PSP, Polícia de Segurança Pública)**, the **Paramilitary Police (GNR, Guarda Nacional Republicana)** the **fire-fighters Department** (for assistance and transportation) and the **National Authority for Civil Protection (ANPC – Autoridade Nacional de Protecção Civil)**. The Portuguese islands, Azores and Madeira, have an independent system, and, in some occasions, military equipment such as helicopters is available.

- **Regional and local level:** it is up to the Mayor of a City Hall, as the person responsible for the municipal civil protection, to start, during or after an emergency, serious accident or catastrophe, the actions needed to protect, prevent, assist and rehabilitate in each case.

Main entities involved in health crisis situations:

National level

- National Institute for Medical Emergency - INEM
- Directorate-General for Health -DGS, Ministry of Health
- Support Unit for the National Health Authority and Management of Emergencies in Public Health
- National Authority for Civil Protection - ANPC
- Portuguese Public Safety Police
- Guarda Nacional Republicana (Paramilitary Police)
- Fire-fighters Department

More information can be found on the “HEALTH C Background report” available at: http://healthc-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/D2.3-Background-report_final1.pdf