

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

Resource: Information sheet – INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN UNION LEVEL

Objective: Provide a general overview of the International and European Union context in terms of levels of responsibility and entities involved in preparedness and response to health crisis.

International level

- **Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI):**

This Initiative was launched in November 2001 by Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, United Kingdom and the United States. The World Health Organization (WHO) serves as an expert advisor to the GHSI. The GHSI was envisaged as an informal group to fill a gap for like-minded countries to address health issues of the day, such as global health security.

Since its inception in 2001, the GHSI partnership has provided a forum for member delegations to engage in dialogue, generate new knowledge, share best practices, and exchange preparedness approaches. The GHSI has helped to inform the efforts of national governments aimed at advancing health security and has resulted in strengthened capacity and decision-making related to Chemical, Bacteriological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats and risks. More information: <http://www.ghsi.ca>

- **World Health Organization (WHO):** WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. The WHO has produced several documents related to the topic of preparedness and response to public health emergencies. One of the most important is:
 - [The International Health Regulations \(IHR\)](#): are an international legal instrument created to help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide. It entered into force in 2007 and it is binding on 194 countries across the globe, including all the Member States of the WHO.

The **WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe)** is one of WHO's six regional offices around the world. Its work is concentrated among six focus areas, including health security and communicable diseases. In this area, the Office works to promote adherence to the IHR in the Region, and share information with Member States through established channels and mechanisms for notification and surveillance. Further, it provides support to governments and affected populations during and after public health emergencies, and provides expertise in risk assessment and emergency preparedness planning.

European Union level

- **Health Security Committee (HSC):** The European Commission coordinates health security measures in the EU through the HSC. Set up in 2001, it brings together high-level representatives from the Ministries of Health of the 28 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland under the Commission chairmanship. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Medicines Agency (EMA) and WHO are observers to the HSC. The HSC ensures the coordination of response to public health crises at the EU level. Its role is to:
 - ensure that effective preparedness mechanisms are in place;
 - coordinate public health risk assessment and management of serious cross-border health threats in the EU, in particular in crisis situations.
- **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC):** is an EU agency established in 2005 aimed at strengthening Europe's defences against infectious diseases. Its mission is to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. In order to achieve this mission, the ECDC works in partnership with national health protection bodies across Europe to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems. The ECDC brings together health communication research and best practices and develops practical resources with the aim to assist public health authorities in Member States in their health promotion initiatives.
- **European Civil Protection:** the European Mechanism for Civil Protection was created in 2001 with the aim to facilitate cooperation between countries, also states outside the EU, regarding situations in need of urgent response by Civil Protection authorities. It has a number of tools intended to facilitate both adequate preparedness as well as effective response to disasters at a community level.

Main entities involved in health crisis situations:

International level

- World Health Organisation - WHO
- Global Health Security Initiative partnership – GHSI

European Union level

- Health Security Committee – HSC
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and control – ECDC
- European Civil Protection

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