



GHSAG
W.G. on risk management and communication

Meeting on Early warning for CBRN threats

Luxembourg – 26 to 28 February 2008

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE MEETING

The GHSAG senior official meeting in Ottawa in June 2007 identified CBRN early warning as an area with great potential to support the efforts of GHSAG. The Risk Management and Communications Working Group (RMCWG), was mandated to undertake preliminary assessments of the opportunities.

The meeting of the RMCWG in Luxembourg on 26-28 February was the second meeting of the working group. The purpose of the meeting was to identify - in the context of CBRN hazards and risks - the capacities and the input needs of the existing IT systems working currently in the early detection of public health threats. Furthermore, the meeting addressed:

- the possibilities of increased cooperation between these systems and the key users,
- the possibilities to offer resilience of information to partners if one/more of the system(s) are not available,
- the potential of developing a shared analytical capacity of the information gathered,
- the possibility to have one central node compiling the relevant information and analyses available, and
- the setting up of regular information reports.

Participants

The systems represented in the meeting were MedISys and Hedis (European Commission), GPHIN (Health Canada), ProMed (USA International society for infectious diseases), BioCaster (Japan), ARGUS System (Georgetown University - USA), HealthMap (Harvard-MIT Division of Health Sciences & Technology- USA), PULS (University of Helsinki - Department of Computer Science), and the European Space Agency.

The users participating in the meeting were the Health Protection Agency (United Kingdom), the Institut de Veille Sanitaire (France), Robert Koch Institute (Germany), Centre for Prevention of Diseases and Control (CDC-USA), European Centre for Disease prevention and Control (ECDC), World Health Organisation (Headquarters), US Department of Health and Human services, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Japan), National Institutes of infectious diseases (Japan) and the European Commission services.

Conclusions

All discussions, comments or remarks made over the three days' meeting, clearly reflected the need of cooperation at all levels, between systems, between systems and users, and users amongst themselves.

Such cooperation should be considered at the level of the collection of data, at the level of data analysis of the data available and the subsequent sharing of the relevant information through a common restricted platform. It was agreed that the initiative should only tackle CBRN threats, but include the communicable diseases events related to the terrorism threat. Other communicable diseases events and threats to health, although complementary, are or should be covered in other forum than GHSAG.

It was agreed that a pilot project is to be launched once the political support is confirmed. The project is still to be defined in detail, but its objectives would be to determine what is possible to achieve and what benefit could be obtained by a virtual network of analysts.

A restricted portal for the exchange of information on projects will be set up by the EU Commission's Joint Research Centre, based on the current HEDIS platform. This common repository of documents will be a place where to store selected news, and later on, analysis of events. In addition the portal should be a place for discussion and exchange of knowledge.

The way forward

A provisional roadmap has been set out, consisting of the preparation of a report to be submitted for endorsement to the members of the Risk management and Communication Working Group (May 2008). After endorsement, the report will be forwarded to the GHSAG senior officials meeting in Ottawa in June. If accepted, the final programme of activity will then be sanctioned by the Ministers in December at their meeting in Brussels.

The next meeting of the RMCWG will be held in London in April 2008.