



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : General Secretariat

to: Council

Subject : EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
COUNCIL MEETING ON 9 AND 10 JUNE 2008

Health Security related matters

- Information from the Commission
(Other business item)
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With a view to the Council meeting (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer affairs) on 9 and 10 June 2008, Delegations will find in the annex a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject.

HEALTH SECURITY RELATED MATTERS

INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION

I. The Council on 22 February 2007 agreed to the transitional prolongation and extension of the mandate of the Health Security Committee (HSC).

The HSC has re-adapted its working structure and working methods according to the Council conclusions of February 2007. The new structure of the HSC is composed of the following parts:

- Plenary;
- Three Sections (on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear threats (CBRN), Generic preparedness and response, and Influenza preparedness and response);
- Ad hoc working groups.

The HSC approved the following documents in this context:

- Rules of Procedure;
- Working structure of the HSC;
- Terms of reference of the sections of the HSC.

At plenary meetings the HSC delivers opinions, identifies actions and decisions that might be taken at political level, endorses produced guidelines and/or recommendations, and considers scientific assessments on specific subjects in order to carry out the tasks conferred to it by the Council conclusions of 22 February 2007.

The sections of the HSC are composed of senior experts from the respective fields from Member States and the Commission. They prepare thematic documents in order to prepare the discussions at the Plenary.

If needed, the HSC can create additional ad hoc working groups which provide expertise on specific subjects.

When the HSC adopted its new working structure and rules of procedure it was agreed that all partners, the Commission and Member States, would take an active role in progressing priorities and that all, individually or jointly, would take a lead on specific themes.

The HSC has adopted its strategic work plan 2008-2010 which comprises the seven following areas:

1. Detection, Information Management, Communication;
2. Threat and Risk Assessment;
3. Advice;
4. Managing a Crisis;
5. Preparedness;
6. Inter-sectoral and International co-operation;
7. Evaluation and testing of plans.

In accordance with the Council conclusions of February 2007, the Commission has transmitted to the Council an annual Activity Report of the HSC, comprising the time period October 2006 – November 2007, in April 2008.

In that period, the main items dealt with by the HSC were as follows:

- Restructuring of the HSC;
- Priorities 2008-2010;
- Generic preparedness and response planning for emergency situations in the health sector;
- Influenza preparedness and response planning;
- Adoption of EU guidelines on environmental sampling and biological incident response;
- Discussion on the need for EU wide standard operating procedures for passenger tracing;
- Review of preparedness exercises at EU level and in Member States;
- Test for holding plenary meetings in secured installations.

The next HSC plenary meeting will take place on 12 June 2008 at the Château de Senningen, a secure meeting place of the government of Luxembourg.

The HSC, under its renewed mandate, continues to be an effective forum for linking decision makers in Member States on health security issues. To ensure an effective response and a high level of operational preparedness, Member States need to ensure the nomination of high-level representatives authorised to take decisions at national level with an appropriate degree of security clearance, as laid down in the HSC Rules of Procedure, in order to:

- improve co-operation on preparedness for health crisis situations; and,
- be in a position to take rapid decisions on effective response measures to protect the European population in a health crisis situation.

II. The second EU public health programme is being used to ensure appropriate funding for the priority areas of work identified by the HSC.

III. The Commission will host the next ministerial meeting of the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI) of the G7+ partners. The meeting will take place in Brussels, on 5 December 2008. The ministerial meeting will be preceded by meetings of the group of senior officials and working groups on risk management and communication, and on laboratory cooperation under the GHSI.
