



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs** Council meeting on
20 and 21 June 2013

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)
– *Information from the Commission*
(Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note on the abovementioned subject.

The European Union is currently monitoring two outbreaks with pandemic potential: the new avian influenza virus A (H7N9) in China and the newly discovered Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) identified in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates and Qatar and exported to the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy. On-going research is trying to better understand the mechanisms of transmission and the reservoirs of these viruses, with a view to limit the spread of the outbreaks and protect citizens in Europe.

The European Commission is taking both threats very seriously. The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus in particular is raising attention. The cases notified recently in Europe support the evidence that the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus can be transmitted from an infected person to a healthy person. It needs to be underlined, however, that this appears to occur only through close contact. So far, there is no evidence that sustained human-to-human transmission is taking place. However, such transmission cannot be excluded.

Since the first alert posted through the Early Warning and Response System by the United Kingdom on 23 September 2012, the Commission is constantly monitoring the situation in close cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the World Health Organisation Headquarters and the European Regional Office, and the partners of the Global Health Security Initiative.

Upon request of the Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has provided three risk assessments and several situation reports. Specific case definitions have been developed and updated in order to rapidly identify possible cases imported into the European Union. Human-to-human transmission has occurred in the United Kingdom, France and Italy. The transmission of all identified cases to date has been a result of close contact.

In order to update Member States as regards the epidemiological situation and to discuss possible public health measures in the EU, the Commission has convened audio conferences with the Health Security Committee and with the contact points of the Early Warning and Response System. The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus was also extensively discussed during the plenary meeting of the Health Security Committee on 5 June 2013. The Members of the Committee agreed to prepare health information for travellers, advice to health professionals and information on relevant clinical support networks in close cooperation with the Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Future consultations with the Health Security Committee will be convened as the situation develops.
