



THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG
Ministry of Health



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Conference: "Lessons learned for public health from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa – how to improve preparedness and response in the EU for future outbreaks" (12-14 10.2015)

In order to analyse the impact of the Ebola outbreak on health security, the European Commission and the Luxembourg Presidency have jointly organized a high-level conference in Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg (12 - 14 October 2015).

The Ebola outbreak in 2014 and 2015 in West Africa and the repercussions it had at international level has substantially changed our perception and understanding of global health security.

For Luxembourg Health Minister Lydia Mutsch, *“cross-sectoral cooperation is crucial if we want to strengthen health security within the European Union and to improve the response and preparedness capacities of Member States in case of future outbreaks.”*

The ministers of Health and high representatives of the Member states, the European Commission, the WHO (World Health Organisation) as well as NGO's came together on this occasion to discuss this issue.

Luxembourg Health Minister, Lydia Mutsch, has opened the conference alongside, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis. Other key-note speakers included EU Ebola Coordinator and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides, Director General of the World Health Organization Dr Margaret Chan and German Health Minister Hermann Gröhe.

Identify learning points arising from the Ebola epidemic

The aim of this conference was to identify learning points arising from the Ebola epidemic which will be crucial to strengthen health security within the European Union, enhance the preparedness and response capacities of EU Member States and put us in the position to respond rapidly, flexibly and effectively to emergencies and disease outbreaks in the future.

According to EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis, *“The outbreak also triggered repercussions for Europe, and served as a test case for our own preparedness arrangements under the framework set by the Decision on serious cross-border threats to health. We need to draw lessons on how we can be better prepared - here in Europe, to face health threats in the future. I am committed to ensuring EU legislation and procedures remain fit for purpose, so we can efficiently address any crisis that comes our way.”*

“Getting closer to zero cases is welcome news, yet the danger's not over. We can't be complacent, not today, not tomorrow”, stressed Christos Stylianides, EU Ebola Coordinator. *“There will be more epidemics like Ebola in the future, especially due to global population growth and climate change, so we need to be better prepared next time”,* he added.



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Health Minister Lydia Mutsch, who felt particularly honored to count Dr Margaret Chan among the speakers, noted: “ *there is a lot that can be learnt from the assessment performed by the World Health Organization on how to intensify the strategic development and the maintenance of health system preparedness.*”

For German Health Minister Hermann Gröhe, the conference was the occasion to present the conclusions of the meeting of health ministers of the G7 meeting, held on October 9 in Berlin, on the teachings of the mobilization against Ebola: “*We must consider health, more than ever, worldwide. Pandemics do not stop at the border. Only shared responsibility will enable Member States to cope with future epidemics.*” he argued.

EU Health Award

An award ceremony to grant the European Health Prize - devoted this year to NGOs which have been active in fighting Ebola - completed the opening part.

Within the framework of the conference, four parallel workshops on 13 and 14 October will analyse: (1) the Ebola outbreak as a complex crisis: the EU response and inter-sectoral cooperation; (2) best practices for treatment and prevention including protection of health care workers, medical evacuation, diagnostic methods and vaccines; (3) communication activities and strategies addressed to the public and health professionals; and (4) the Ebola epidemic from a local challenge to a global health security issue.

The final output of the conference will inform discussion amongst the Council of Ministers in the EPSCO Council in December.

Communicated by the Luxembourg Ministry of Health.

Photos:

http://extranet.sip.lu/photos/main.php?g2_itemId=125953

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