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EMETNET

European Multiple Environmental Threats Emergency Network (EMETNET)

Overview of the EMETNET project

EMETNET will provide a simple, efficient, inexpensive and robust methodology to enable the rapid assessment of risks and impacts of emerging environmental threats, thus providing a harmonised understanding of the associated health, environmental, cross-sectoral and societal impacts. The rapid risk assessment of these events will aid defensible decision making, communication, planning and risk management.

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FOI

What's the problem?

Every year the world is hit by numerous natural and man-made disasters, such as the recent severe earthquake in Italy and forest fires in Portugal. In 2015, there were a record 198 natural catastrophes. As a consequence, many lives are lost, the environment is badly damaged and infrastructure and livelihoods are severely disrupted. The EU and UN have mechanisms in place to support countries when an environmental disaster strikes and they deploy experts to the scene to assist the local community. On arrival, these experts often find themselves in the midst of a chaotic situation, in which local and perhaps even national authorities are overwhelmed. Piecing together the necessary information from scattered sources to coordinate a risk assessment is a major challenge. Moreover, these experts often don't have access to the technical back-up and expertise they receive in their own countries. Providing these experts with a rapid risk assessment and back-office support would offer significant benefits.

Who is the target audience for the rapid risk assessments?

The target for the rapid risk assessments is both those working in a coordination capacity - e.g. DG ECHO Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), DG SANTE Health Emergency Operations Facility (HEOF), National Civil Protection Authorities, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) - and those involved in the operational deployment to disasters and crises (e.g. experts deployed through the Civil Protection Mechanism, UN workers).

What will the rapid risk assessment provide?

The risk assessment will provide a rapid overview of the potential and actual health and environmental impacts of emerging environmental disasters. This assessment can be used to support the selection of individuals and assets to be deployed to affected regions, to provide a snapshot assessment to individuals on route to disaster zones and, to support the transmission of specific information to and from the disaster zone to update the situational picture of the event.

How will this be achieved?

A methodology for developing rapid risk assessments was developed for serious cross-border chemical health threats (ECHEMNET, 2016). This methodology will be applied to environmental hazards and will involve four core elements:

1. A standardised risk assessment protocol based upon traditional risk assessments but allowing for the dynamic and multi-factorial nature of environmental threats.
2. A network of expert risk assessors that can assemble quickly and work collaboratively, even though geographically separate, to rapidly develop best practise advice.
3. A methodology to enable experts to work in real-time in a coordinated and auditable manner.
4. Reiteration of approaches based upon findings from exercises and working in pilot mode in response to emerging environmental threats.

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Work Packages

The EMETNET project is split into five work packages to ensure delivery of the project objectives:

Work Package 1 – Project Co-ordination (Led by RIVM)

WP1 is responsible for project co-ordination to ensure the project team delivers on project objectives to time and on budget.

Work Package 2 – Impact Assessment Scale, Rapid Risk Assessment Methodology and Guidance for Risk Assessors (Led by PHE)

WP2 is responsible for developing the rapid risk assessment methodology and risk assessor guidance by building upon the Rapid Risk Assessment (RRA) methodology developed in the ECHEMNET project. Within this work package, PHE will also work to establish an impact scale for environmental hazards expanding on existing established scales such as IMPEL.

Work Package 3 – Network of Experts and Engagement (Led by RIVM)

WP3 is responsible for developing a network of expert risk assessors to cover the rapid risk assessment of multiple environmental hazards, expanding on the network established in ECHEMNET. This expanded network will run in 'pilot mode' during the project to support the Commission in assessing the multiple impacts of emerging environmental threats and to provide back-office support to first responders in the field.

Work Package 4 – Exercises and Lessons Learnt (Led by FOI)

WP4 will design exercises to assess and evaluate whether the RRA methodology and network of experts will support the efforts of the ERCC in co-ordination and assessment of environmental hazards as well as providing lessons learnt from previous disasters to support WP2 and WP3.

Work Package 5 – Project Dissemination and Evaluation (Led by PHE)

WP5 is responsible for project dissemination and evaluation and seeks to promote awareness of the project with EU member states, civil protection authorities, stakeholders etc., both in and outside the EU.

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Project team

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