

How Spain deals with cross-border health threats

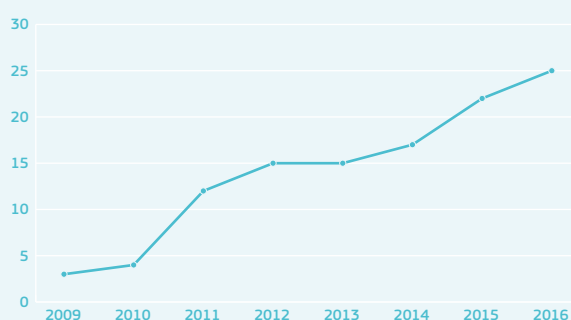
Spain has developed robust systems for dealing with cross-border health threats such as Ebola and Zika outbreaks. Collaboration with EU partners helps Spanish authorities to prepare and respond – and vice versa.

EU policy seeks to protect Europeans from serious health threats that have impacts across national borders. These challenges can be more effectively tackled by Europe-wide cooperation. Under Article 168 of the Lisbon Treaty and Decision 1082/2013/EU on serious cross-border health threats, the EU encourages coordination between countries, including the sharing of best practice.



75 suspected Ebola cases were reported in Spain.

Number of infectious incidents of interest for Public Health



Responding to Ebola

The EU response to the outbreak of Ebola virus disease illustrated how EU countries, including Spain, worked together through an acute crisis. The European Commission's Health & Food Safety Directorate-General has monitored Ebola, in cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), since the outbreak began in West Africa in March 2014. The

Commission and EU countries worked closely within the Health Security Committee (HSC) to share information and coordinate approaches to increase preparedness and response capacities for serious cross-border health threats. Through the Quality Assurance Exercises and Networking on the Detection of Highly Infectious Pathogens (QUANDHIP) Joint Action, European high-containment laboratories shared expertise throughout the Ebola viral disease emergency in 2014-2015.

The first human-to-human transmission of the Ebola virus disease outside Africa was reported in Spain in October 2014. Spanish authorities played a central role in responding to the outbreak, with the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality keeping EU institutions and countries informed of developments.

A protocol for defining, diagnosing and managing cases was approved and regularly updated. Authorities took

measures to protect health professionals by providing personal protection equipment, training and simulation exercises. The National Reference Laboratory of the Health Institute Carlos III supported regional hospital laboratories that analysed 75 suspected cases, and a National Ebola Management Committee was established.

The EU provided valuable support and information to Spanish authorities while Spain's experience of training personnel and applying the latest diagnostic technologies was shared with European partners.

European cooperation: meeting shared challenges together

The Health Institute Carlos III advises the Centre for Coordination of Sanitary Alerts and Emergencies (CCAES) of the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality on public health surveillance and is responsible for the National Reference Laboratories and Centres (Epidemiology, Microbiology, Environmental Health, Rare Diseases and others). The Institute is an active partner in European projects and networks, including the following examples.

EMERGE: Efficient response to highly-dangerous and emerging pathogens at EU level

The EMERGE Joint Action supports a European network of BSL 3 and BSL 4 laboratories working to identify dangerous bacterial and viral human pathogens. The Joint Action is a European network with more than 40 diagnostic laboratories, from 23 Member States, focused on risk group 3 bacteria and risk groups 3 and 4 viruses. The National Microbiology Centre (NMC) from the Health Institute Carlos III is an active member of the EMERGE Joint Action. Staff at the NMC benefit from the External Quality Assurance Exercises (EQAE) and training programme organised by EMERGE. This Joint Action started in June 2015 and is running for 36 months.

http://www.emerge.rki.eu/Emerge/EN/Home/Homepage_node.html

EPISOUTH and EPISOUTH PLUS: Network for Communicable Disease Control in Southern Europe and Mediterranean Countries

The EpiSouth Plus project aims to increase health security in the Mediterranean Region by enhancing the preparedness for, and detection of, public health threats at national/regional level. The main objective is to enhance the Mediterranean Early Warning (EW) systems and promote the sharing of alerts and epidemic intelligence information among EpiSouth countries. The initiative involves partners from 27 countries, including nine EU Member States, 17 non-EU countries and one EU candidate country.

<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/episouth-project>

EU SHIPSAN ACT Joint Action: The impact on maritime transport of health threats due to biological, chemical and radiological agents, including communicable diseases

The EU SHIPSAN ACT Joint Action brings together 33 partners from 26 countries to safeguard the health of travellers and crew and prevent the cross-border spread of disease. The Health Institute Carlos III contributed to achievement of one of the SHIPSAN ACT's specific objectives: the production of a series of state-of-the-art reports on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agents in all types of ships. The reports were coordinated by the National Centre for Epidemiology (CNE).

Find out more



EU response to Ebola

https://ec.europa.eu/health/ebola_en

Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality – Public Health

<https://www.msssi.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/queEsCCAES/misifunci.htm>

Health Institute Carlos III – Epidemiology

<http://www.isciii.es/ISCIII/es/contenidos/fd-servicios-cientifico-tecnicos/vigilancias-alertas.shtml>

