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Introduction:

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance in strengthening cooperation and coordinated action of Member States (MS) to improve preparedness and response capacities at points of entry (PoE). This emphasizes the need for perpetuating the work of EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS (EU HG) and the availability of this cross-European network to transfer lessons learned for future public health threats.

Methods:

An interdisciplinary sustainability working group identified options for continuity of activities at EU level and provided a template national sustainability plan to be adapted by MS based on national needs and priorities.

Results:

Since the beginning of the pandemic EU HG provided 37 consultations to MS, developed 15 advice documents, delivered training courses, produced a study on preparedness and response at PoE and developed the EU digital Passenger Locator Form (EUdPLF) system. A European web-based network for PoE was developed including discussion forums, e-learning platform, searchable network of professionals' at PoE registry, bibliographies, web-based training resources and best practice catalogues. Overall, the 533 inspectors in the EU SHIP SAN INFORMATION SYSTEM (EU SIS) recorded 29268 IHR (International Health Regulations) certificates, followed up 69 public health events via the communication network for EU ports, and recorded >4600 hygienic deficiencies.

Conclusions:

EU HG has a holistic approach, supporting operations on local, regional, national and European level and by taking into account all transport sectors. The web-based systems and capacity building activities support EU Decision 1082/2013/EU for serious cross-border health threats and the EUdPLF supports implementing Decision (EU) 2017/253 for the contact tracing of passengers identified through PLFs. Adoption of components of EU SIS will support implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1239 which includes the provision of a common ship sanitation database.

What is next? Vision statement and reflections for sustaining project outcomes in a possibly post-pandemic era

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