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The first meeting of the Asset High Level Policy Forum was held in Bruxelles on March 12. The Forum was intended to bring together selected European policy-makers at regional, national and EU levels, key decision makers in health agencies, the pharmaceutical industry, and civil society organisations, in a unique and interactive dialogue to promote on-going reflection on EU strategic priorities about

pandemics.

«We still are just in the first phases of recruitment of policy and decision makers,» says Harald Dräger, president of The International Emergency Management Society, partner of ASSET project responsible for the specific task. «Nevertheless the first meeting was very fruitful: we had useful exchange of ideas with relevant experts such as Bjorn Guldvog, Director General of Health and Chief Medical Officer of the Norwegian Directorate of Health and Thea Kølsen Fisher of the Serum Institute in Copenhagen, Denmark».

During the meeting, ASSET partners presented some aspects of the project, while Karl Ekdahl, Head of Public Health Capacity and Communication at European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in Stockholm explained the major consequences of the EU Decision 1082 on serious cross-border threats to health.

Further physical meetings will be scheduled on a yearly basis, while virtual meetings will then be scheduled between the physical meetings. Their purposes will be to consider and revise specific issues related to EU strategic priorities in pandemic preparedness, including communication and other responses. «The Forum may produce recommendations» Dräger specifies, «but its primary role will be to create mutual trust, improve communication, and provide a 'safe' environment to address questions which are otherwise difficult to discuss».

The forum aims to strengthening the perception that further dialogue among the participants is going to be fruitful due to increased insights into each other's perspectives, and the sense that conversation between the concerned parties has intrinsic value. The participants will not participate in any official position, but it is hoped that they might influence policy decisions in a variety of ways.

If interested in ASSET-HLPF and being or

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