

Bringing SiS issues into Pandemic Preparedness & Response

The overall objective of ASSET project is to contribute to incorporating Science-in-Society issues into the system of Research and Innovation related to pandemic or epidemic preparedness by:

- exploring and mapping SiS-related issues in global pandemics;
- developing a partnership with complementary perspectives, knowledge and experiences to address effectively scientific and societal challenges raised by pandemics and associated crisis management;
- developing a participatory and inclusive strategy.

6 MAINSIS/RRI THEMES

ASSET Strategic Plan outlined some priorities in the field of pandemics or infectious emergencies, which follow 6 main themes:

GOVERNANCE

- Following 2009 A(H1N1) pandemic, authorities still have to face **mistrust**;
- the **perception of conflict of interests** by the public is not completely solved;
- in **risk and outbreak communication** there is still space for improvement;
- **ethical, law, human rights and gender issues** are scarcely considered.

UNSOLVED SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS AND OPEN ACCESS TO SCIENTIFIC OUTCOME

- Communicating **uncertainty**;
- role of **new social media**;
- top-down uni-directional **decision process**;
- **involvement of GPs**;
- **non-pharmacological preventive steps** (e.g. frequent hand-washing);
- **inter-disciplinary** scientific approach.

CRISIS PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

- Previous challenges, along with:
- neglect **local conditions**;
 - lack of **flexibility**;
 - **underestimation** of citizens needs and capacity hurdle an effective participation of citizens in the management of a crisis.

ETHICS, LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

- Ethical, human rights and legal issues, which include:
- **solidarity**;
 - **public good versus personal privacy and freedom**;
 - **transparency and informed consent**;
 - **stigmatization**;
 - **resource allocation**;
- are also relevant for their impact on the spread of diseases.

GENDER ISSUES

- **Pregnant women** can be more vulnerable;
- women have **lower rate of immunization**;
- mainly men in **clinical trials**;
- few women in **decision committees**;
- scarce attention to this theme in **preparedness and response plans**.

INTENTIONALLY CAUSED OUTBREAKS

- National and international authorities should have policy documents **ready to be used** in case of emergency;
- security and ethical implications of any measure must be discussed **before the crisis**;
- countries and institutions should also consider participation in **international regimes** for these issues;
- **attitudes of citizens** should also be explored.

