

# CASE STUDY

## Towards establishment of poison centres



Montenegro

### Multi-country training workshop: initial steps in establishing a poison centre

*(Podgorica, Montenegro, 12–13 December 2022)*

Implementing organization: WHO Regional Office for Europe  
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#### Overview, objective(s), activities

To minimize the negative impacts of chemicals and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.9, to reduce substantially the numbers of deaths and illnesses due to hazardous chemicals, WHO supports the establishment and strengthening of poison centres (PC) as specialized units for the prevention, diagnosis and management of acute and chronic poisoning. The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, in cooperation with the WHO Country Office, Montenegro, organized a workshop to provide information, share experience and expertise on PCs and to assist participating countries in taking the first steps towards the establishment of PCs. Many topics were covered, including roles and responsibilities, the structure and organization of work of PCs, toxicosurveillance, toxicovigilance and databases.

#### Engagement of partners and stakeholders

The workshop was designed for six countries for which establishment of a PC was recommended by a Joint External Evaluation of implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) and/or which expressed interest in receiving assistance for establishment of a PC: Albania, Armenia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Two representatives of their ministries of health participated in the workshop.

Leading experts in PCs from Germany, Estonia, Italy, Malta, North Macedonia, Türkiye and the United Kingdom participated, including in public health management of chemical emergencies, the International Health Regulations (2005), early warning systems, clinical services for cases of poisoning, antidotes supply, sound management of chemicals and notification of hazardous products. A total of 25 national and international experts attended the workshop.



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### Outcomes

The national experts

- received essential information about PCs, including WHO guidance on their establishment (2021);
- shared experience and discussed the specific needs of countries; and
- built contacts with other national and international experts.

The following conclusions were reached:

- PCs play a significant role in public health systems.
- Further WHO assistance is required.
- A step-by-step approach to establishment of a PC could be considered by countries with limited resources.
- The essentials for setting up a PC include an information database, trained staff, sustainable financing, a government budget allocated specifically for the PC, and equipment.

### Acknowledgement

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### Key achievements

In addition to sharing knowledge and information, priorities were identified for support at regional and global level. They include support for toxicological laboratories, exchange of information on analytical toxicological practice, organization of stockpiles of antidotes (perhaps at regional level), especially to meet the needs of small countries, bilateral sharing of protocols and assistance in receiving professional advice.

### Lessons learnt

A multi-country workshop for national experts from countries with similar needs and priorities can be effective for sharing knowledge, experience, expertise and expectations and for bilateral discussions. This model should be further explored to ensure progress in areas such as establishment of PCs.

### Key messages and steps forward

To continue cooperation with countries for establishment of PCs,

- consider prioritizing the topic for discussion at the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (July 2023);
- depending on available funds, implement pilot projects in two or three countries;
- guide and support assessment of national capacity and selection of a PC model;
- organize study tours when possible; and
- support preparation and submission of proposals for PCs.