



International network node for health protection – G20 at RKI

13.09.2017

Risks to public health know no boundaries. “Complex health issues such as the growing problem of antibiotic resistances, novel pathogens from the animal realm or serious disease outbreaks can only be tackled together, beyond functional, institutional and geographical boundaries,” Lothar H. Wieler, President of the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), stressed on the occasion of the first meeting of the public health and veterinary public health institutes of the G20 states on 13.9.2017 at RKI. It is planned to continue the cooperation and to involve the national institutes from the environmental sector. RKI has increasingly developed its central role with a view to the development and coordination of public health measures, also internationally, during the past years; internationalisation is one of the focal areas of the 2025 Strategy of RKI.

There is an increasing demand for the expert knowledge of the Robert Koch Institute in support of the stronger international commitment of Germany in the field of health protection. RKI employees are actively involved in many projects of the Global Health Programme of the Federal Ministry of Health and the German Partnership Programme for Excellence in Biological and Health Security of the Federal Foreign Office. RKI is likewise involved in the European Medical Corps and the German Epidemic Preparedness Team set up by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2015. During the Ebola outbreak in 2014/2015, RKI scientists and technical employees had more than 80 deployments in western Africa. In 2016 the World Health Organisation (WHO) appointed RKI as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Emerging Infections and Biological Threats. For measles and rubella as well as for polio, RKI has been a reference laboratory for the WHO Region Europe for years.

The international tasks of the Robert Koch Institute were established by law with the amendment to the Infection Protection Act in July 2017. Co-operation can include both the permanent scientific collaboration with institutions in partner states and the training of staff and support in the field of epidemiological risk assessment and crisis management. It was explicitly stipulated that RKI staff may be deployed outside Germany.

The meeting of the public health and veterinary public health institutes of the leading industrial countries takes place for the first time. The occasion is Germany’s presidency of the G20, the forum of the twenty leading industrial and emerging countries. For the first time, global health has been a topic at the G20, with a special focus on the sustainable improvement of healthcare systems in developing and emerging countries as well as the worldwide fight against antibiotic resistances. In May 2017, the first meeting of health ministers took place within the framework of the G20, and the crisis simulation exercise of the ministers had been co-developed by RKI. The Lancet magazine has published a special issue on the growing engagement of Germany in international health protection, which was presented at the RKI in July 2017.

The Federal Ministry of Health has invited to the meeting of the national public health and veterinary public health institutions in Berlin on 13 and 14 September 2017; the heads of institutes meet during the afternoon of the first day at RKI. The invitation had been issued by RKI together with the Friedrich Loeffler Institute, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment and the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety. RKI has been co-operating with these institutes for many years.

Further information on: www.rki.de/international-activities

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