

PUBLIC HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENTS AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Tamara Tomašević,¹ Dejan Ivanović,¹ Verica Jovanović,¹ Ivan Ivanović,¹ Miljan Rančić,² Jakov Boban,¹ Miljan Perić,³ Miloš Todorović,¹

¹*Institute of Public Health of Serbia Dr Milan Jovanović Batut, Belgrade, Serbia*

²*World Health Organization, Country office for Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia*

³*Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia*

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Background: In the Republic of Serbia, as in other countries, local governments play a crucial role in implementing measures for the prevention and response to public health risks. The risk assessment strategy proposed by World Health Organization (WHO) is of utmost importance for proper risk assessment at the local level and is essential for an effective and timely response to threats that endanger community health.

Methods and Objectives: The Strategic Tool for Risk Assessment (STAR) by the WHO assists public health authorities in rapidly and evidence-based assessing public health risks for emergency planning and management. STAR employs a participatory approach and evidence consolidation through six steps: hazard identification, probability assessment, impact assessment, risk level determination, recommendation and reporting finalization, and integrating recommendations into action plans to enhance capacity.

Objectives: The objective of this work is to evaluate the improvement in risk assessment capabilities at the local level following training on the application of the STAR tool.

Results: The assessment will cover up to 144 local government units from November 2023 to October 2024, offering a comprehensive overview of public health risks across regions. The risk matrix evaluation revealed significant exposure and public health vulnerabilities throughout the Republic of Serbia. Key hazards, including natural and technological risks, were identified and analyzed for their likelihood and impact, enhancing understanding of regional risks. Risk levels associated with each hazard were determined to prioritize activities and responses. Detailed recommendations for risk management are in development, addressing specific hazards and suggesting measures to mitigate their impact.

Conclusion: Assessing public health risks at the local level is crucial for timely response to threats that endanger community health. This work emphasizes the importance of capacity building, a systematic approach, experience sharing, and harmonization of assessments at the local level.

Keywords: STAR, WHO, local governments, public health risk assessments