



Network for Communicable Disease Control in Southern Europe and Mediterranean Countries

PROJECT OUTLINE
September 2009

INTRODUCTION

Infectious diseases as well as potential health threats do not have geographical boundaries. Apart from few infectious diseases for which a valid and efficacious vaccine is available, surveillance is the only available instrument that public health personnel can use to contain the spread of infectious diseases. However, in order to translate data into appropriate action, dissemination of information is crucial. Furthermore, an early detection of cases and a cross-border, harmonic and prompt response is needed to effectively contain the spread of diseases.



The countries of the Mediterranean area have common sea borders in the remarkable ecosystem of the Mediterranean Sea and, as a result, they also share common public health problems.

During a preliminary meetings held in 2004 in Athens (organized by the Hellenic CDCP) and Venice (organized by Italian ISS and Veneto Region), experts from Bulgaria, Greece, France and Italy discussed the possibility to create a co-operative effort in the Mediterranean and Balkan countries, similar to that developed by EpiNorth Project in Northern Europe and then decided, in occasion of the Year of the Mediterranean (2005), to propose to the countries belonging to such an area a project called EpiSouth.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the EpiSouth project is to create a framework of collaboration on epidemiological issues in order to improve communicable diseases surveillance, communication and training across the countries in the area of Mediterranean and Balkans.

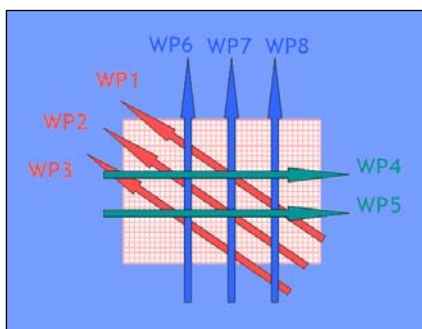
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Several areas of activity were identified and are being developed through specific Work Packages (WP) as follow.

- 1 - **Co-ordination of the project (WP1)**, with the main specific objective (SO) of guaranteeing a high quality performance of the project.
- 2 - **Dissemination of the project (WP2)**, with the main SO of disseminating the information produced by EpiSouth within the participating countries and to those who need to know through an ad hoc created website and an electronic bulletin.
- 3 - **Evaluation of the project (WP3)**, with the main SO of evaluating the project and its achievements in terms of milestones, deliverables, and indicators.
- 4 - **Network of public health institutions (WP4)**, with the main SO of facilitating the networking process and activities among participants in order to strengthen solidarity and cohesion.
- 5 - **Training in field/applied epidemiology (WP5)**, with the main SO of strengthening the early response capacity of participating countries to health threats and infectious disease spread.
- 6 - **Cross-border epidemic intelligence (WP6)**, with the main SO of establishing a common platform on epidemic intelligence where participating countries may find broad internationally as well as regionally focused information.
- 7 - **Vaccine-preventable diseases and migrant populations (WP7)**, with the main SO of assessing the access to immunisation and exchanging information on cases/outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases of migrant populations.
- 8 - **Epidemiology and preparedness to cross-border emerging zoonoses (WP8)**, with the main SO of providing a platform for the communication of human (HPH) and veterinary public health (VPH) officials, describing risk assessment methods and providing a mechanism for exchanging information between HPH and VPH.

METHODS

The EpiSouth project is articulated in 8 Work Packages (WP) led by Public Health Institutes.



The main partner (ISS Italy) has developed a framework where all the managerial aspects are being included (WP1) and the information produced by the project are being disseminated (WP2).

Three vertical WPs, "Cross-border epidemic intelligence-WP6" (InVS, France), "Vaccines and migrants-WP7" (NCIPD,

Bulgaria) and "Cross-border emerging zoonoses-WP8" (HCDCP, Greece) constitute the technical basis.

The two horizontal Work Packages, "Networking-WP4" (Padua, Italy) and "Training-WP5" (ISCIII, Spain) provide the skills, networking and capacity building in order to match the vertical Work Packages. The project is evaluated through a dedicated Work Package (WP3).

PROJECT NETWORK ORGANISATION

Once the project had been approved by EU-DGSANCO, the effort done by the EpiSouth Project Steering Committee was to verify the strategic possibility to involve in the Project all the interested countries of Mediterranean area.

In this framework, the 1st Project Meeting was organised in Rome in March 2007. In addition to the 9 Countries which were involved in the project from the beginning, 13 countries from the Balkans, North Africa and Middle East participated to the meeting together with representatives of EU DGSANCO, EU ECDC, WHO, and Italian MOH. Once the EpiSouth project objectives and methodology were discussed, the new organization and partnership were elaborated.

The Project Steering Committee is composed by the 6 WP leaders plus ECDC, EC-SANCO C3, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO, WHO LYO and Italian MOH representatives as observers, in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping.

The participation of the Countries and the International Organisations to the project foresees three different levels of active involvement:

- a) Focal Points (FPs) of the Episouth Network (WP4). Each Country/International Organisation identifies and appoints one or two relevant persons who act as Focal Point (FP) of the Episouth Network and convey all the communication/information to the relevant officers in their respective Countries/Organisations.
- b) Collaboration in the Work Packages Steering Teams (WPSTs). In order to facilitate and enhance the work, each Country/International Organisation actively collaborates in one or two WP Steering Teams, which is in charge for identifying the countries' needs, developing the tools and the conducive project environment in accordance with the specific objective and requirements of the related WP.
- c) Participation to Work Packages' activities. Each participating country participate to the activities of one up to all the WPs in accordance with their needs and interests.

As per September 2009, the EpiSouth Network counts 26 Countries which have identified and appointed a total of 62 Country Focal Points (30 from EU-Countries and 32 from non-EU Countries) plus 7 representatives from Collaborating Institutions.

Cross-border Epidemic Intelligence on web site and Epidemic Intelligence Bulletin

The Epidemic Intelligence Bulletin reports new health events occurring outside and inside EpiSouth Area that may have implications on EpiSouth populations. In fact, the international public health intelligence comes as a complement to regular monitoring of national surveillance and aims to identify health threats that can potentially affect these populations. Epidemic intelligence, based on already collected and circulating information, consists in the sorting out, verification, analysis and eventually dissemination of information.

Access-restricted section on the website is used to allow rapid circulation of information, to offer a space for discussion and to share alerts originating from EpiSouth partners and restricted only to partners. In fact, all participating countries should be able to communicate their alert of potential common interest to the other participating countries.

Vaccine-preventable diseases and migrant populations

A country based assessment survey for vaccine preventable diseases and migrants among participating countries has been carried out and the results on country specific migrant groups, organization and performance of their immunizations and problems faced by the national public health system in this context will be disseminated.

Moreover, a strategic document on vaccine preventable diseases and migrant populations will be produced with guidelines for exchanging information on VPD among migrants and recommendations for improving the access to immunizations of migrant groups.

Epidemiology and preparedness to cross-border emerging zoonoses

A directory with accurate contacts of human (HPH) and veterinary public health (VPH) officials for specific diseases has been prepared and will be available for strengthening the communication and collaboration between the Mediterranean countries regarding exchanging information on emerging zoonotic infections with possibility of cross border transmission.

Moreover, a strategic plan featuring indices for the description of epidemiology and monitoring in the area of a selected list of zoonoses (Brucellosis, Leishmaniasis, Campylobacteriosis, Rabies, West Nile Virus) and a strategic document on "Risk assessment methods for cross-border transmission of zoonoses and mechanism to exchange information between Human Public Health and Veterinarian PH officers on possible outbreaks" will be produced and disseminated.

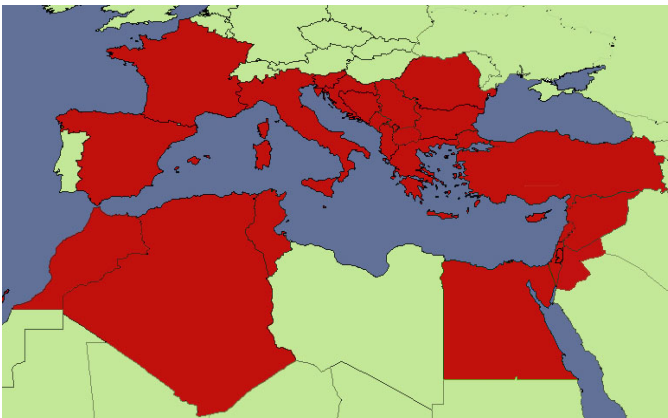
FUNDING

The EpiSouth project receives funds from the European Commission (DG SANCO) and the EU participating Institutions for the overall project infrastructure and EU countries participation. In addition, the financial support of Italian Ministry of Work, Health and Social Policies (EpiMed Project) and the EC EuropeAid and DG Enlargement through the TAIEX facility has made possible the participation of non-EU Countries.

PROJECT DURATION

The project started officially the 1st October 2006 and is expected to last until 30 June 2010.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES



As per September 2009, 26 countries are part of the EpiSouth Network plus 6 Collaborating Institutions

South Europe (9)

- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- France
- Greece
- Italy
- Malta
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Spain

Balkans (7)

- Albania
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Croatia
- FYROM
- Kosovo
- Serbia
- Montenegro

North Africa (4)

- Algeria
- Morocco
- Egypt
- Tunisia

Middle East (6)

- Israel
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Turkey
- Syria
- Palestine

Collaborating Institutions

- EC DG Sanco
- ECDC
- Italian MOH
- WHO-EURO
- WHO-EMRO
- WHO-HQ

PARTICIPATING PARTNERS

ALBANIA, Tirana (Institute of Public Health);
ALGERIA, Alger (National Institute of Public Health);
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (Ministry of Civil Affairs, Sarajevo; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska; Public Health Institute, Mostar, Federation of B&H);
BULGARIA, Sofia (National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases-NCIPD);
CROATIA, Zagreb (Croatian National Institute of Public Health);
CYPRUS, Nicosia (Ministry of Health);
EGYPT, Cairo (Ministry Of Health and Population);
FYROM-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje (Institute for Health Protection; Clinic of Infectious Diseases);
FRANCE, Saint Maurice Cedex (Institute for Public Health Surveillance-InVS);
GREECE, Athens (Hellenic Center for Diseases Control and Prevention-HCDCP);
ISRAEL (Center for Disease Control, Tel Hashomer; Ministry of Health, Jerusalem);
ITALY (National Institute of Health-ISS, Rome; Teaching Hospital, Padua);
JORDAN, Amman (Ministry of Health);
KOSOVO UNSCR 1244, Prishtina (National Institute of Public Health);
LEBANON, Beirut (Ministry of Public Health);
MALTA, Msida (Ministry of Health, Elderly and Community Care);
MONTENEGRO, Podgorica (Institute of Public Health);
MOROCCO, Rabat (Ministry of Health);
PALESTINE, Ramallah (Ministry of Health);
ROMANIA, Bucharest (Institute of Public Health);
SERBIA, Belgrade (Institute of Public Health);
SLOVENIA, Ljubljana (Institute for Public Health);
SPAIN, Madrid (Carlos III Health Institute-ISCIIII);
SYRIA, Damascus (Ministry of Health);
TUNISIA, Tunis (Ministry of Health);
TURKEY, Ankara (Ministry of Health; Refik Saydam National Hygiene Center).

ECDC-European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Stockholm, Sweden;
EUROPEAN COMMISSION-DG SANCO Public Health Directorate, Luxembourg;
MOH-Ministry of Work, Health and Social Policies, Rome, Italy;
WHO-EMRO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt;
WHO-EURO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark;
WHO-LYO Department of Epidemic and Pandemic Alert and Response, International Health Regulations Coordination, Lyon, France.

PROJECT RELATED EVENTS

Past events (2006-2008)

<i>1st Steering Committee Meeting</i>	Venice, Italy	11-13 December 2006
<i>1st Plenary Meeting</i>	Rome, Italy	28-30 March 2007
<i>1st Training module</i>	Madrid, Spain	10-14 September 2007
<i>2nd Steering Committee Meeting</i>	Athens, Greece	10 & 12 December 2007
<i>2nd Plenary Meeting</i>	Athens, Greece	10-12 December 2007
<i>2nd Training module</i>	Madrid, Spain	2-6 June 2008
<i>3rd Steering Committee Meeting</i>	Brussels, Belgium	30-31 October 2008
<i>4th Steering Committee Meeting</i>	Sofia, Bulgaria	30 March 2009
<i>3rd Plenary Meeting</i>	Sofia, Bulgaria	30-31 March 2009
<i>3rd Training module</i>	Madrid, Spain	15-19 June 2009

Next events (2009-2010)

<i>5th Steering Committee Meeting</i>	Venice, Italy	<i>12-13 November 2009</i>
<i>4th Plenary and Consensus Meeting</i>	Rome, Italy	<i>21-23 April 2010</i>

PROJECT OFFICE

Project Leader

Silvia Declich

Istituto Superiore di Sanità - Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion

Viale Regina Elena, 299

00161 Rome - Italy

e-mail: silvia.declich@iss.it

WP1 Leader - Coordination of the project

Maria Grazia Dente

Istituto Superiore di Sanità - Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion

Viale Regina Elena, 299

00161 Rome, Italy

e-mail: mariagrazia.dente@iss.it

WP2 Leader - Dissemination of the project

Massimo Fabiani

Istituto Superiore di Sanità - Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion

Viale Regina Elena, 299

00161 Rome, Italy

e-mail: massimo.fabiani@iss.it

WP3 Leader - Evaluation of the project

Roberto Gnesotto

Azienda Ospedaliera di Padova - Padua Teaching Hospital

Training and International Projects Department

Via N. Giustiniani, 1

35128 Padua, Italy

e-mail: rgnesott@yahoo.com; progetti.internazionali@sanita.padova.it

WP4 Leader - Network of public health institutions

Giovanni Putoto

Azienda Ospedaliera di Padova - Padua Teaching Hospital

Training and International Projects Department

Via N. Giustiniani, 1

35128 Padua, Italy

e-mail: giovanni.putoto@sanita.padova.it; progetti.internazionali@sanita.padova.it

WP5 Leader - Training in field/applied epidemiology

Fernando Simon Soria

Instituto de Salud Carlos III - Carlos III Health Institute

National Epidemiology Centre

C/ Sinesio Delgado 6

28029 Madrid, Spain

e-mail: fsimon@isciii.es

WP6 Leader - Cross-border epidemic intelligence

Philippe Barboza

Institut de Veille Sanitaire - French Institute for Public Health Surveillance

Department International and Tropical Diseases

12 rue du Val d'Osne

94415 Saint Maurice Cedex, France

e-mail: p.barboza@invs.sante.fr

WP7 Leader - Vaccine-preventable diseases and migrant populations

Mira Kojouharova

National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases

Department of Epidemiology and Surveillance of Communicable Diseases

26, Yanko Sakazov Blvd.

1504 Sofia, Bulgaria

e-mail: mkojouharova@ncipd.org

WP8 Leader - Epidemiology and preparedness to cross-border emerging zoonoses

Rengina Vorou

Hellenic Center for Diseases Control and Prevention

Office for Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases

56, 3rd Septembriou Street

10433 Athens, Greece

e-mail: vorou@keelpno.gr