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Communicable diseases

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Highlights



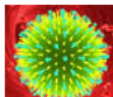
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[The European Commission coordinated the response to the pandemic \(H1N1\) and is now following-up measures to be taken at EU level](#)

Policy

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Policy

Over the last decades, EU countries have fought infectious diseases with success through treatment and prevention. Rates of infectious diseases have either fallen or remained stable, and the majority of deaths in EU countries are now due to non-infectious diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

However, micro-organisms adapt themselves and we have to expect new and emerging infections, as with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, variants of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the 1990s, SARS in 2003 and pandemic influenza. Other challenges – like micro-organisms' resistance to antibiotics – also have to be tackled.

In response to the threat of communicable diseases, EU policy has focused on:

- surveillance
- rapid detection
- rapid response

❖ EU network

An [EU network for the epidemiological surveillance and control of communicable diseases](#) has been in place since 1999. It focuses on:

- [surveillance of communicable diseases](#)
- [early warning and response coordination](#)

❖ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

[ECDC](#) was set up in 2005 to assist the EU by identifying and assessing the risk of current and

PRESS RELEASE

Rome, 2 February 2011

For immediate release

EPISOUTH PLUS

The first Steering Committee Meeting of the EpiSouth Plus Project will be held in Luxembourg on February 3, 2011 to revise the Network organization and to agree the work plan for the first year.

The activities of the [EpiSouth Network](#) started in October 2006 with the involvement of 9 EU Member States. It worked for the past four years in enhancing communicable disease surveillance in the Mediterranean region and includes now 27 countries (9 EU and 17 non-EU, plus one candidate country). It is therefore the biggest inter-country collaborative effort of this kind in the region.

A new phase of the Network activities was approved and started on October 2010. Building on the knowledge of [regional gaps and needs identified during the first EpiSouth implementation](#), the new **EpiSouth Plus Project** aims at increasing the health security in the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening the preparedness to common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels in the countries of the EpiSouth Network.

Seven Work Packages, jointly co-lead by EU and non-EU countries, ensure the following specific objectives:

1. To facilitate common threat detection by establishing a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories Network.
2. To promote common procedures in interoperable Generic Preparedness and Risk Management among the countries involved in the Network.
3. To enhance Mediterranean Early Warning functions allowing alerts and epidemic intelligence information sharing among EpiSouth countries through the development of interoperability with other Early Warning Platforms and especially the European Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) as forecasted by the current EU legislation.
4. To facilitate IHR implementation through a strategic document based on assessments and surveys on how national plans and legislations can interact/interfere with IHR requirements.

EpiSouth Plus is co-financed by the EU DG-EAHC/SANCO and EuropeAid for an amount of 3.9 million Euro together with the involved Public Health Institutes and Ministries of Health. The financial support of the Italian Ministry of Health and ECDC is also acknowledged.

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The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

"The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".

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