

EPI SOUTH NETWORK



WORK PACKAGE 1

Coordination

Objectives

To guarantee a high quality performance of the project ensuring that timetables for the completion of works are set and adhered to;

To ensure the enlargement of the number of non-EU countries and international partners in the EpiSouth project and establish links with appropriate European and international resources.

Main Achievements

Each year WP 1 produced:
a work-plan and reports of the issues discussed during the Steering Committee meetings; and
technical and financial reports at the end of each year of activity.

Moreover it ensured the involvement of non-EU countries of the Mediterranean Basin in the network and in the activities carried out by the EpiSouth Project by securing additional resources from other International Institutions.

Activities

WP1 staff facilitates organisational aspects and communications among all the participants involved and promotes and supports synergy, cohesion and harmony of the WPs' issues dealt by the project and methods utilised during the project's implementation.

The EpiSouth project needs the synergic collaboration of 8 Working Packages (WPs) to function. This implies the active participation of 9 European Countries and several non-European Countries of the Mediterranean Basin. To date 27 Countries are part of the EpiSouth Network.

In this framework, an efficient and effective coordination (managing communication process among participating countries, coordinating the working groups, facilitating priorities setting, etc.), is needed in order to optimise and enhance the project's impact.

The project's coordination is ensured by the Working Package 1 (WP1), which is managed by the main partner (Istituto Superiore di Sanità - ISS).

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: the 6 WP leader Countries in addition to ECDC, EC-SANCO, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO and WHO LYO as observers in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping.



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WORK PACKAGE 2

Dissemination

Objectives

To disseminate the information produced by the Project to the participating countries and to those who need to know through: an ad hoc created web-site, an electronic bulletin, the participation to scientific events and the organization of the press coverage for Project's main events;

To facilitate communication among project's participants through a restricted-access network working area in the web site

Main Achievements

WP2 produced the EpiSouth web-site, a portal for communicable disease epidemiology, communication and training in Southern Europe, Balkans and Mediterranean Countries. The web-site is both an output of the project and a mean by which most of the results have been disseminated to the international audience. The team released a quarterly electronic bulletin summarizing project related news and achievements. Finally, it actively promoted participation to conferences, congresses and workshops and organized the press coverage for the EpiSouth conference and meetings

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: the 6 WP leader Countries in addition to ECDC, EC-SANCO, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO and WHO LYO as observers in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping.

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Activities

The WP2 staff collate information gathered by other WPs, coordinate the content of the web-site, edit the EpiSouth Electronic Bulletin, and ensure that an ongoing process of data renewal is in place.

Information gathered through the EpiSouth network needs to be disseminated to the international audience. For this purpose, different instruments were elaborated to target the general public and national and international institutions (open-access web site and quarterly electronic bulletin).

In order to facilitate networking among people working in different project WPs, a restricted-access Network Working Area was established as a permanent communication tool to support document sharing, discussion of relevant topics and management of activities.



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WORK PACKAGE 3

Evaluation

Objectives

To evaluate the project in terms of:

- Respect of scheduled milestones and deliverables according to the project WPs;
- Achievement of the stated project indicators, both for quantitative and qualitative aspects;
- Active participation of both associated and collaborating countries in the project activities.

Main Achievements

WP3 key outputs were the Evaluation Plan, the Mid-term and Final evaluation reports. The Final evaluation report's outline consists of the following chapters: a) EpiSouth evaluation's goal and methods; b) Description of the Project as planned; c) Project management: resources, structures and processes; d) Project implementation; e) Achievement of goal and objectives; f) Impact and unintended consequences; g) Relevance and sustainability; h) Context: opportunities and constraints.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: the 6 WP leader Countries in addition to ECDC, EC-SANCO, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO and WHO LYO as observers in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping.

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Activities

The WP3 staff coordinated the evaluation of the project and conducted six questionnaires specifically designed to investigate the project's main aspects.

EpiSouth's monitoring and evaluation focuses particularly on aspects which are critical for building the Network and for the outputs of the individual WPs. The evidence used to assess the project's degree of success was extracted from the following sources:

- a) Key products (e.g. Training modules, Procedures on cross-border epidemics control);
- b) Web site structure, contents, frequency of use and customers' satisfaction;
- c) Participating institutions and quality of presentations at the final conference;
- d) Meeting minutes; e) Interviews with important stakeholders;
- f) Focus groups with professionals involved in the project; g) specific questionnaires.



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WORK PACKAGE 4

Network of Public Health Institutions

Objectives

To strengthen connections between all participating countries, in order to reduce the variability of approaches in communicable diseases surveillance.

Main Achievements

Links among institutions belonging to the network have been strengthened and information regarding the core functions of each public health institute was made available through an updated directory of Institutions involved in surveillance of communicable diseases in southern Europe, the Balkans and Mediterranean Countries. The great effort made through networking was the most evident added value of the Episouth Project. It enabled participants to develop a sense of trust and a common understanding of the technical priorities in Public Health in the region and ultimately reach consensus on possible solutions to propose.

Activities

WP4 facilitated the networking process, provided information regarding institutions involved in communicable diseases surveillance in the Mediterranean area and in the Balkans. Moreover, WP4 worked to harmonise the activities of vertical work packages (WP6, WP7, WP8).

Countries belonging to the Mediterranean area share common public health problems. For this reason, it is crucial to create a network of institutions responsible for surveillance of infectious diseases. Communication among partners is the best way to react and respond to possible health threats, and the dissemination of the information to those who need to know enables a prompt action. On the one hand the networking process was open and participatory; on the other, the participants of the network should very much rely on stronger cohesion. Evidence from the questionnaires and the interviews highlighted that the potential of the network should be exploited by a strengthened governance with identification of common aims and shared responsibilities

WP4 Steering Team Members: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Israel, and the 6 WP leader Countries in addition to ECDC, EC-SANCO, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO and WHO LYO as observers in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping.



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WORK PACKAGE 5

WP5 Training in field/applied epidemiology

Objectives

To strengthen the early response capacity of participating countries to health threats and infectious diseases by organizing short-term training courses and seminars and by promoting participation in existing training programmes of interest.

Main Achievements

The WP conducted a training needs assessment among participating countries focusing on: analysis of surveillance data, outbreak investigation, risk assessment, system characteristics and communication among countries and analysis tools. Based on this assessment the team conducted three training modules and elaborated teaching material. Approximately 100 medium-to-high level epidemiologists, from EU and non EU Countries, participated with profitable exchange of knowledge and acquisition of a common understanding of health issues in the Episouth region. Moreover an updated directory of training courses and fellowships of interest to Episouth countries was elaborated. Finally the WP produced a strategic document on training in the Episouth region

Activities

WP5 organized short-term training courses and seminars and promoted participation to existing training programmes of interest. The three one-week modules included workshops and trainings. Workshops focused on: communicable disease surveillance systems in the region; risk assessment & communication and outbreak management. Training focused on: analysis of time series & spatial data; modelling of infectious diseases; multivariate analysis

With shores on three continents, the Mediterranean has long been the basin of trading societies. It is today, one of the biggest tourist destinations and has been described as a "central superhighway of transport, trade and cultural exchange". Thus past and present have conferred to the region a unique identity. More than a geographical or political aggregate, Mediterranean countries share a similar epidemiological profile and tend to face similar problems resulting from their sharing an open space. The Episouth project addressed, through WP5, some of the common training and networking needs of participating countries..

WP5 STEERING TEAM MEMBERS: Spain, Romania, Serbia, Algeria, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria



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Objectives

To monitor health events of international concern (e.g. Avian Flu, SARS, A/H1N1v, etc.);

To monitor health events with potential cross border impact in EpiSouth Countries (such as Dengue in Saudi Arabia and Cholera in Iraq);

To monitor and report regional cross border issues within the EpiSouth Region

Activities

WP6 conducted a pilot assessment of existing epidemic intelligence (EI) activities in participating countries, developed epidemic Intelligence weekly bulletins and thematic notes and elaborated a web-based secured section on cross-border epidemic intelligence with alerts originating from partners

Main Achievements

All participating countries were provided access to the secure cross-border alert platform on which they have been able to communicate and exchange information on health alerts of potential common interest. This tool was developed based on the results of an assessment of existing EI activities and needs in the different participating countries that was conducted at the beginning of EpiSouth activities. Moreover the WP6 team produced and distributed EI weekly bulletins and thematic notes to members, monitoring health events of international concern and a strategic document on the implementation of EI in the EpiSouth region.

WP6 STEERING TEAM MEMBERS: France, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia

In an environment where circulation of goods and people is constantly increasing, the epidemic risk is also growing. To fulfill their public health mission, States must not only exert a continuous monitoring of their population's health, but also set up the capacity to identify medical threats emerging internationally. 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 through the monitoring, selection, verification, analysis and eventually dissemination of already collected and circulating information



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Objectives

To assess the access to immunization of migrant populations and immigrants;

To collect data and exchange information on cases/outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in this target group;

To provide an overview of existing programmes for monitoring and improvement of immunization coverage of migrant populations;

To formulate recommendations facilitating the evaluation and improvement of immunization activities among migrant populations and immigrants in the Episouth region

Activities

WP7 assessed the status of vaccine preventable diseases and migrant populations in the Episouth region, and elaborated a strategic document on the topic with specific recommendations for policy makers and public health officials.

Main Achievements

The WP7 team conducted a country based assessment survey for vaccine preventable diseases and migrant populations among participating countries in order to collect information about country specific migrant groups of people, organization and performance of their immunizations and problems faced by the national public health systems in this area. Based on the analysis of this data, the team produced a strategic document on vaccine preventable diseases and migrant populations with general recommendations for improving the access to immunizations of migrant groups

WP7 Steering Team Members: Bulgaria, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria, and Tunisia.

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Apart from the increased potential for the spread of infectious disease, that a more mobile global population brings, there are also concerns that migrants' health prevention needs are not always adequately met in the receiving Country; especially for certain migrant groups, e.g. irregular migrants and asylum seekers. In the past years Countries in the Mediterranean and Balkans have been experiencing intensive migration and Health Systems in this region are challenged by the need to provide all residents with access to preventive care including immunization. WP7 aims to develop tools and recommendations to help participating countries assess access to immunization among immigrant and migrant communities and improve immunization coverage in identified vulnerable groups



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WORK PACKAGE 8

Epidemiology and preparedness to cross-border emerging zoonotic infections

Objectives

To strengthen the collaboration between Mediterranean and Balkan Countries through the exchange of information on emerging zoonotic infections with the potential for cross border transmission;

To describe the epidemiology of selected zoonoses in the EpiSouth region;

To facilitate intersectoral collaboration between Human Public Health (HPH) and Veterinary Public Health (VPH) officials within each participating country (one Health), as well as across the Episouth region in order to ensure monitoring, prediction and timely recognition of cross border transmission.

Main Achievements

The analysis of the survey allowed the team to describe the current epidemiology of zoonoses of common interest in the region (brucella, leishmania, campylobacter, rabies, west nile virus). Moreover, a platform for the communication of human (HPH) and veterinary public health (VPH) officials, with listing of accurate contacts for specific diseases was produced and made accessible on the website and a document on emerging zoonoses in the Episouth region was elaborated.

WP8 Steering Team Members: Greece, Cyprus, Albania, FYROM, Kosovo, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria

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Activities

WP8 conducted a survey among participating countries on a list of zoonoses of common interest selected in the course of the first project meeting. Moreover the WP worked to identify the HPH and VPH officials, designated by the countries' authorities for each selected zoonosis.

Human health is inextricably linked to animal health and production. The provision of health care has gradually diverted from individual patients to the community, large-scale planning techniques were devised and evaluation techniques focused on zoonoses and surveillance over foods of animal origin. Although regions with close co-dependence of animals and humans are found around the Mediterranean, Mediterranean countries significantly lag in intersectoral collaboration with most VPH and HPH services being segregated and working separately. Building on the framework of activities carried out by WHO, MED-VET-NET and the EU, WP8 has set in place a complementary approach to epidemiology and preparedness of emerging zoonoses oriented at filling the gaps, enhancing synergies and promoting experience-sharing among participating countries



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