

EpiSouth: from a European Project to a Mediterranean Network for the Control of Communicable Diseases

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BACKGROUND AND AIM

The Mediterranean countries share common epidemiological characteristics and public health problems. In 2005, the "Year of the Mediterranean", some European Public Health Institutes proposed a framework of collaboration for communicable diseases surveillance and training in the Mediterranean Basin. This initiative led to EpiSouth Project, co-funded by EU Public Health Programme (DG SANCO) and by Italian MOH (EpiMed Project).



The EpiSouth Network

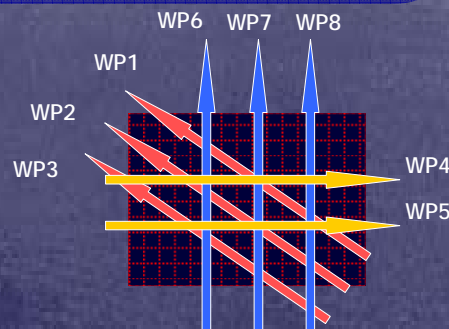


2nd EpiSouth Meeting – Athens Dec 2007

METHODS

EpiSouth works through Work-Packages (WP), lead by Public Health Institutes. The project is coordinated by the main partner (ISS, Italy) while three vertical WPs, "Cross-border epidemic intelligence" (InVS, France), "Vaccine Preventable Diseases and migrants" (NCIPD, Bulgaria) and "Cross-border emerging zoonoses" (HCDCP, Greece), constitute the technical pillars on which the project develops. "Networking" (PTH, Italy) and "Training" (ISCIII, Spain), are WPs dedicated to capacity building. The project is evaluated through a dedicated WP.

The Project Steering Committee guides the activities while all countries collaborate through WP Steering Teams and designated national Focal Points to become part of the EpiSouth Network.



Work Package interrelations



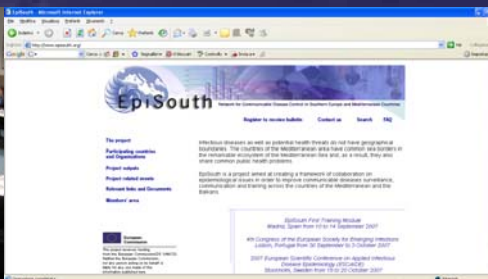
EpiSouth Electronic Bulletin Issue 1 - Jan 2008

RESULTS

Starting as an EU project, EpiSouth struggled to develop its Mediterranean vocation. From an initial involvement of 5 countries (Italy, Spain, France, Greece and Bulgaria) it includes now partners from 26 countries of South Europe, Balkans, North Africa and Middle-East, and from international organizations (EU, ECDC, and WHO). Several outcomes, including website with a restricted area, electronic bulletins, training modules, the assessment of Network's building progress, the evaluation of national epidemic intelligence, epidemiological weekly bulletins, the preliminary survey on vaccine-preventable disease and migrants, and a list of priorities for emerging zoonoses in the Mediterranean and Balkans, have been accomplished and documents are available on the web-site (www.episouth.org).



1st EpiSouth Meeting – Rome March 2007



EpiSouth Website



1st Training Module – Madrid Sept 2007

CONCLUSIONS

EpiSouth is a unique project covering all sides of the Mediterranean. The collaboration among countries is giving a clearer picture of the peculiar context in this region and identifying significant gaps in public health. The Project is in line with the EU's external actions of Neighbourhood Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership where networks are among the tools for cooperation and integration with neighbouring countries.

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