



Episouth Report 1/2007

EpiSouth Project

Report of the First Project Meeting

(Rome, 28-30 March, 2007)

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on behalf of the EpiSouth Network (*)

MAY 2007



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1. Introduction

1.1 EpiSouth General Objective

The general objective of the 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.

1.2 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.

1.3 Methods

Each WP is lead by an European Public Health institute. A total of 6 PH Institutes (WP leaders), are associated for the development of these 8 WPs.

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 tools that help fulfilling the objectives of the vertical Work Packages. The project is evaluated through a dedicated WP3 (Padua, Italy).

1.4 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, and WHO. Once the EpiSouth project objectives and methodology were



discussed, the new organization and partnership were elaborated as all the 13 non-EU countries accepted to collaborate to the project.

The 2nd Project Meeting took place in Athens in last December 2007 and, in addition to the Countries present to the 1st Meeting, other four were invited as potential partners of EpiSouth Network.

The Project Steering Committee is now composed by the 6 WP leaders Countries plus ECDC, EC-SANCO C3, WHO EURO, WHO EMRO and WHO LYO-HQ 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 who 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. The participation to the activities of WPs not chosen can be requested by the country in the coming years.

As per March 2008 the Network counts 24 Countries, (plus Tunisia that is in progress with its official commitment to EpiSouth) which have identified and appointed a total of 58 Country Focal Points (28 from EU-Countries and 30 from non-EU Countries) plus 5 representatives from International Organisations.

2. Objectives and Outcomes of the 1st EpiSouth Project Meeting

As already reported above, the ultimate objective of EpiSouth project is to create a working network among the Mediterranean and Balkan Countries.

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

In this framework, the idea of organising the 1st Project Meeting has emerged in order to gather together all the representatives of the Mediterranean and Balkan Countries with the double aim of sharing the EpiSouth project objectives and methodology and of discussing with all the invited countries their willingness and interest to participate to the project.

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 could participate to the meeting. Representatives of EU DGSANCO, EU ECDC, and WHO could also participate to the meeting (for further details see the list of participants annexed to this report).

During the meeting the objectives and the activities of EpiSouth Project were described in detail as well as the project structure which has been conceived with 8 Working Packages (WPs):

- 3 Framework Working Packages (WP1-Coordination, WP2-Dissemination, WP3-Evaluation);



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- 2 Horizontal (WP4-Network of Public Health Institutions and WP5-Training in epidemiology) and
- 3 Vertical (WP6-Cross-border epidemic Intelligence, WP7-Vaccine-preventable diseases and migrant population and WP8-Epidemiology and preparedness to cross- border emerging zoonotic infections).

It was reported that presently 10 Partners are involved in the project, the WP leaders (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy-ISS, Italy-Padua GH and Spain) and the Associated Partners (Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Slovenia), and it was also stressed the importance of extending the participation to the project to other Countries from Balkans, North Africa and Middle East in order to have a relevant presence of Countries of the Mediterranean Basin in the EpiSouth Project.

Therefore, during the meeting the views and comments of all the participating countries regarding their interests and expectations in participating to the Project were shared and commented in plenary and, before the conclusion of the works, each participating country has been asked to express its preliminary intention to participate to EpiSouth Project and its priority Working Package/s to work with.

In general, the representatives of all the countries expressed their appreciation for the aspects addressed by EpiSouth project and their interest to participate to the project's activities.

However, several countries have clearly reported their need to share all the aspects related to their potential participation to the project with the governmental/institutional authorities of their respective countries.

Therefore, it was decided that In order to make the collaboration official, the EpiSouth leader would have addressed a letter to the interested countries' authorities requesting to reply with an official letter expressing the commitment in the participation to EpiSouth project and nominating the Focal Points for the Network.

Then, on the basis of what has been agreed during the meeting as well as on the basis of the WPs priorities expressed by each country, a proposal on *EpiSouth Project Organization* were outlined and shared with all the participants in few weeks after the closure of the meeting.

It is also worth reporting that during the meeting a consensus has been reached on the fact that the Project Steering Committee (the WPs leaders, ECDC and SANCO C3 as observers) will, from now on, welcome as observers WHO EURO, EMRO and HQ in order to facilitate synergy and avoid overlapping. All WHO entities agreed also to give input in the Work Packages activities.

For what is directly related to the financial possibility presently available to support the participation of non-EU Countries to the Project, it was officially reported during the meeting that the Italian Ministry of Health has jointly developed with the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), the Epimed initiative which will enhance the impact of the EpiSouth project mainly by supporting the participation of non EU Countries in EpiSouth network meetings and training sessions as well as coordination missions of ISS to the non EU Countries.

Finally, it is also dutiful to thank the collaboration of EC DG RELEX and DG AIDCO and the financial support of TAIEX (DG AIDCO and DG ENLARGEMENT), which have contributed to the good outcomes of the meeting allowing that all States surrounding the Mediterranean Sea could be invited.



3.1 Annex: Agenda of the Meeting

Speakers

Stein Andresen	Norwegian Institute of Public Health - Oslo, Norway
Philippe Barboza	French Institute for Public Health Surveillance - Saint Maurice Cedex, France
Massimo Ciotti	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control - Stockholm, Sweden
Silvia Declich	Italian National Institute of Health - Rome, Italy
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Nedret Emiroglu	WHO Regional Office for Europe - Copenhagen, Denmark
Massimo Fabiani	Italian National Institute of Health - Rome, Italy
Enrico Garaci	Italian National Institute of Health - Rome, Italy
Gianni Ghisi	Italian Ministry of Health - Rome, Italy
Roberto Gnesotto	Padua Teaching Hospital - Padua, Italy
Donato Greco	Italian Ministry of Health - Rome, Italy
Zoheir Hallaj	WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean - Cairo, Egypt
Mira Kojouharova	National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases - Sofia, Bulgaria
Jaouad Mahjour	World Health Organization - Beirut, Lebanon
Pierre Nabeth	WHO Office for National Epidemic Preparedness and Response - Lyon, France
Giovanni Putoto	Padua Teaching Hospital - Padua, Italy
Cesare Maria Ragaglini	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Rome, Italy
Stefania Salmaso	Italian National Institute of Health - Rome, Italy
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Germain Thinus	DG SANCO, European Commission - Luxembourg
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First
Project Meeting

28-30 March 2007



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Viale Regina Elena, 299 - Rome, Italy

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2007

13.30 – 14.00	Registration
14.00 – 15.10	Opening Remarks Welcome address by the ISS President <i>Enrico Garaci</i> EpiSouth Project overview <i>Stefania Salmaso, Silvia Declich</i> Objective of the meeting and Meeting management <i>Silvia Declich, Giovanni Putoto, Roberto Gnesotto</i> Introducing participating Countries
Tea Break	15.10 -15.30
15.30 – 17.30	Presentation of vertical Work Packages Work Package 6: Cross-border epidemic intelligence <i>Philippe Barboza</i> Work Package 7: Vaccine-preventable diseases and migrant populations <i>Mira Kojouharova</i> Work Package 8: Epidemiology and preparedness to cross-border emerging zoonotic infections <i>Rengina Vorou</i> Discussion

DAY 2: THURSDAY 29 MARCH 2007

9.00 – 10.00	Presentation of horizontal Work Packages Work Package 4: Network of public health institutions <i>Giovanni Putoto, Roberto Gnesotto</i> Work Package 5: Training in field/applied epidemiology <i>Fernando Simon Soria</i> Discussion
10.00 – 11.20	Presentation of framework Work Packages Work Package 1: Co-ordination of the project <i>Silvia Declich</i> Work Package 2: Dissemination of the results <i>Massimo Fabiani</i> Work Package 3: Evaluation of the project <i>Roberto Gnesotto</i> Discussion
Coffee Break	11.20 -11.40

11.40 – 13.00	Work session 1 – Countries' Presentations Experience of the EpiNorth Project <i>Stein Andresen</i> Countries' presentations and interest in EpiSouth Project <i>All Countries</i> (<i>Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, FYROM, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Montenegro, Palestine, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey</i>)
Lunch Break	13.00 -14.00
14.00 - 15.30	Work session 1 – (continued)
Tea Break	15.30 -15.50
15.50 - 17.30	Work session 2 – European and International organizations' points of view and Funding opportunities ECDC interest and interaction with EpiSouth <i>Massimo Ciotti</i> The WHO point of view <i>Nedret Emiroglu, Zoheir Hallaj, Jaouad Mahjour, Pierre Nabeth</i> EU interest in Public Health issues of the Mediterranean and Balkan areas <i>Germain Thinus</i> Round Table: Funding opportunities for non-UE Countries

DAY 3: FRIDAY 30 MARCH 2007

9.00 – 10.00	Work session 3 –Participation of non-EU Countries and Work-plan for the first year Commitment by non-EU Countries in building the Network Partners' involvement in each work package Discussion on the work-plan and timetable for the first year
Coffee Break	10.00 -10.20
10.20 – 11.30	Discussion and Conclusion
11.30 – 12.00	Closing Remarks The Italian initiative for a Health Partnership with Mediterranean Countries <i>Gianni Ghisi, Alain G.M. Economides, Cesare M. Ragaglini</i> Closing <i>Donato Greco</i>
Mini Lunch	12.00 -13.00



3.2 Annex: List of Participants



First Project Meeting

Rome (Italy), 28-30 March 2007



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