

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

EPISOUTH PLUS

The EpiSouth Final Conference took place in Rome (Italy) on 20-21 November 2013.

After seven years of activities of the [EpiSouth Network](#), the [EpiSouth-Plus Final Conference](#), organized by the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), has taken place in Rome on 20-21 November 2013 and has been attended by almost 120 participants from the Mediterranean Region, International Organizations (e.g., EC, ECDC, WHO), the Italian Ministry of Health, and elsewhere.

During the conference, the main outcomes of the EpiSouth-Plus Project have been presented and its impact and added value at national and regional levels, as well as the Network's sustainability and possible future sectors of activities, have been discussed. A detailed [program](#) is available on the Project's web-site.

The [EpiSouth Network](#) includes 27 countries (10 EU and 17 non-EU) from Southern Europe, Balkans, Middle East and Northern Africa. It is therefore the biggest inter-country collaborative effort of this kind in the region. Since October 2010, with the approval of a new project phase (EpiSouth-Plus), the network has focused on increasing health security in the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening preparedness to common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels.

In particular, the activities have focused on four main aspects: 1) the creation of a Mediterranean regional network of reference laboratories to support surveillance and response activities, within which, after a needs assessment conducted among participating countries, training courses on bio-safety related to specific infectious agents have been conducted involving 37 technicians from 22 different countries; 2) Support for developing national preparedness and control plans and health risk management procedures, within which training courses for over 50 health professionals from all the 27 countries of the network and a simulation exercise involving more than 100 focal points from 21 countries have been conducted; 3) Early warning system and cross-border epidemic intelligence (EI), within which 4 stages on EI involving 8 health professionals from 6 different countries have been conducted, EI weekly bulletins have been released and the use of a common platform for sharing of international and regional alerts and information among the 80 focal points of the EpiSouth Network has been consolidated; 4) Evaluation of national/international aspects to facilitate the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR-2005), within which a survey to evaluate the coordination for surveillance purposes between the national central health systems and the competent authorities at points of entry has been conducted, even through on-site visits in four participating countries (Italy, Jordan, Malta and Morocco)

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PRESS RELEASE

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The EpiSouth-Plus Project is led by the [Italian National Institute of Health \(ISS\)](#) and counseled by an [Advisory Board](#) composed by EC, ECDC, WHO and other international experts

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