



The 4th EURASIA CONGRESS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

01-05 JUNE 2011

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“Clinical Microbiology, Infectious Diseases, Immunology and Epidemiology”



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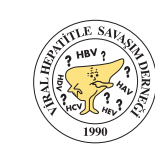
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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL LABORATORY NETWORK IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EPISOUTH-PLUS PROJECT

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Background

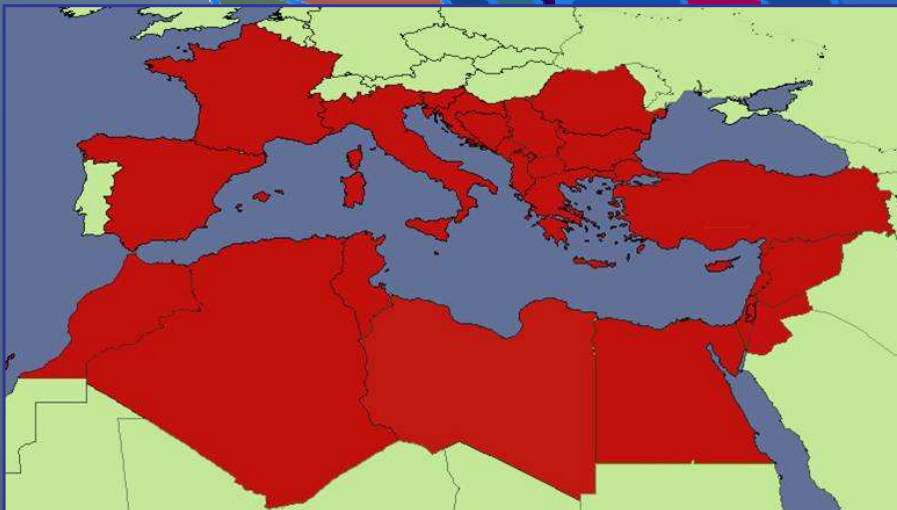
The EpiSouth-Plus Project aims at contributing to the control of public health threats in the Mediterranean region and South-East Europe. Twenty-seven countries (9 EU and 17 non-EU, plus one candidate country) currently participate to the Project, which started in October 2010 and will end in April 2013 and is mainly funded by EU DG-SANCO/EAHC and EuropeAid. One of the Project's work package aims at establishing a Mediterranean Regional Laboratory Network (MRLN) to strengthen the human and technical capacity of participating countries and promote sharing of information to facilitate common threats detection.

Methods

This activity is co-led by the French Institute Pasteur and the Turkish Refik Saydam National Public Health Agency. A Steering Team composed by representatives of several countries facilitate and enhance the work.

Activities and expected results

- Identification of priority areas for common action (pathogens and corresponding diseases) in the Mediterranean basin
- Identification of laboratories interested in joining the MRLN and meeting the expected focus and inclusion criteria
- Links with existing networks
- Mapping of existing biological expertise (Labs and Networks)
- Identification of laboratories' strengths and needs (human, technical and organizational) for diagnosis of priority diseases
- Regional Laboratories Directory available on the website
- Training (including on-the-job training weeks) and workshops
- Strategic document with recommendations on training and capacity building



Laboratory selection criteria

- Relation to the Ministry of Health
- Being a national reference lab
- National/international connectivity with related labs
- Quality control procedures
- Diagnostic performance and identification level according to international standards
- Integration in existing surveillance networks, early warning systems and alert platforms
- Basic staff and equipment infrastructure

Conclusions

The MRLN will strengthen complementarity among laboratory networks presently operating in the area and overcome national logistic and legislation constraints, in support of the health security preparedness of Europe and Mediterranean

Acknowledgments

The EpiSouth-Plus project is led by the Italian National Institute of Health and counseled by an Advisory Board composed by EC, ECDC, WHO and other international experts. The Project is co-funded by the European Union DG SANCO/EAHC and EuropeAid together with the participating national partner Institutions. The financial support of the Italian Ministry of Health and ECDC is also acknowledged.

