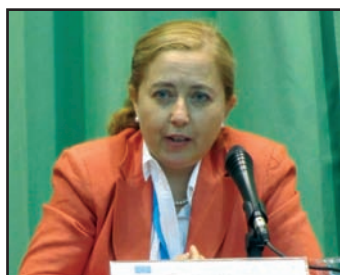




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Isabel Mínguez-Tudela

It was with great sadness that the steering committee of Arbo-Zoonet received the news that Isabel Mínguez-Tudela passed away on 16 Apr 2011, aged 55 after a long battle against cancer. Even under these adverse health conditions, she was working and fighting until the last moment for European research in animal health.

Isabel was senior scientific officer at DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission in Brussels. She was Spanish, trained as a veterinarian and obtained a PhD in Animal Virology in Madrid. She served in the field of Agriculture and Biotechnology for 20 years, managing dozens of EU research projects on animal health including BSE, avian influenza, African swine fever, arbovirus infections, swine flu, foot-and-mouth disease, rabies, and many other topics, thus also including the Arbo-Zoonet project. On behalf of the steering committee of Arbo-Zoonet I can say that Isabel was a leading scientist with a clear vision and competence, thus also being an invaluable help in successfully coordinating Arbo-Zoonet.

Her role in the development of veterinary medicine in Europe and linking it to Asia, Africa and Latin America can not be described with only a few words and will remain in our memory. Many young scientists will remember forever how she supported them to make good science and to collaborate in a fair way. Let us keep her in our hearts and give what we have learned from her to the younger generation in order to continue in her way in doing good science for a fairer world.

On behalf of the Steering Committee and all partners of the Arbo-Zoonet project

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OIE Laboratory Twinning Programme

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The OIE network of expertise includes OIE Reference Laboratories, which provide expertise for a named OIE listed disease, and OIE Collaborating Centres which provide expertise for a designed sphere of competence. The network provides global support for surveillance, diagnostic testing and control of important animal diseases including zoonoses.

Today, the distribution of this network tends to favour developed countries and the northern hemisphere. Through the OIE Laboratory Twinning programme, OIE aims to extend the network to provide a more even geographical distribution, so that more countries will have access to highly quality diagnostic testing and expertise essential for early detection and rapid control. Expertise is essential to ensure proper application of OIE standards and equal representation of developing/in transition countries in international scientific debate.

Each twinning projects links existing OIE Reference Laboratory or Collaborating Centre with a “candidate” Laboratory. Through this link, knowledge and skills are exchanged allowing the candidate laboratory to develop capacity and expertise for a disease or a topic that is priority in its region in order to better comply with OIE International Standards.

The OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund provides financial support to the link between the two institutes for the duration of the project; however funds are not available for purchase of laboratory equipment or for upgrading of laboratory infrastructure. There is scope within a twinning project to support surveys, conducted by experts, that can then be used to attract further support from other donors for infrastructure or equipment.

OIE Laboratory Twinning is therefore a tool to both strengthen sustainable links within the animal health laboratory network and to extend the network to provide better global coverage, particularly in developing and in transition countries. The eventual aim is to create a network of diagnostic capacity and expertise that it is well distributed globally and that provides support in areas where it is needed (e.g. North Africa). This will have long term benefits for animal and human health.

LINKING TO OTHER EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

The EpiSouth Plus Project

Increasing health security in the Mediterranean area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening the preparedness to common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels in the countries of the EpiSouth Network

Ait-Belghiti F¹, Barboza P¹, Giese C¹, Leventhal F², Dente MG³, Bejaoui M⁴, Fabiani M², Alfonsi V², Lausevic D⁵, Salamina G⁶, Victoir K⁷, Kalaydioglu H³, Simon Soria F², Martin de Pando C⁹, Hannoun D¹⁰, Riccardo F³, Nabeth P¹¹, and Declich S³ on behalf of the EpiSouth Network

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2 Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance-MECIDS; 8 Refik Saydam National Hygiene Center, Ankara, Turkey;
3 Italian National Institute of Health-ISS, Rome, Italy; 9 Carlos III Health Institute-ISCIII, Madrid, Spain;
4 Ministry of Health, Tunis, Tunisia; 10 National Institute of Public Health, Alger, Algeria;
5 Institute of Public Health, Podgorica, Montenegro; 11 WHO-LYO
6 Local Health Unit, Turin, Italy;

<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/>

At the occasion of the Year of the Mediterranean (2005), a number of countries that share the same Mediterranean ecosystem and therefore have common public health problems, agreed to develop the project called “EpiSouth”: its aim was to create a collaboration framework on epidemiological issues in order to improve communicable disease surveillance, communication and training in the Mediterranean region and South-East Europe.

“EpiSouth” started in October 2006 with the financial support of the European Commission (EU),

the Italian Ministry of Health and the participating countries. The first EpiSouth phase ended in June 2010. As of June 2010, 27 countries (17 non-EU countries plus 1 candidate to enlargement country) were part of EpiSouth which is therefore the biggest inter-country collaborative effort in the Mediterranean region.

The second phase called EpiSouth-Plus officially started on 15th October 2010 and is expected to last until 15 April 2013. EpiSouth Plus aims at contributing to the control of public health threats and other bio-security risks in the Mediterranean region and South-East Europe. Based on the achievements and lessons learned during firsts years, this new phase will yield a shift of activities with a wider approach to address regional gaps and needs identified in the fields of Epidemic Intelligence, Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Migrants, Cross Border Emerging Zoonoses and Training.

EpiSouth Plus is funded by the European Union (DG-SANCO/EAHC and EuropeAid) together with the participating national Institutions. The Project is also supported by the Italian Ministry of Health and ECDC.



EpiSouth participating countries



EpiSouth Meeting, Rome, April 2010

EpiSouth Plus Objectives and Organisation

The EpiSouth Plus project aims at increasing health security in the Mediterranean area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening preparedness for common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels in the EpiSouth countries in the framework of the International Health Regulations. The reinforcement of trust based relations in the region is an objective and an instrument in the scope of the project's implementation.

Ensuring a successful response to this challenge requires a solid framework of collaboration and information exchange among the 27 participating countries. For this purpose, Focal Points from each participating country have been appointed and asked for active involvement and collaboration in the project's activities.

The project is organised in seven Work Packages (WP), jointly co-led by EU and non-EU countries. WP leaders work in close collaboration with the corresponding WP Steering Team, while a Steering Committee, constituted by all WP leaders and the Project General Assembly, constituted by all participants, are responsible for the general strategic decisions. An Advisory Board, constituted by representatives of the collaborating institutions and external experts, provide support for the preparation of relevant documents and recommendations.

Activities

Apart from three transversal WPs (i.e., WP1-Coordination; WP2-Dissemination; WP3- Evaluation) the project's activities are articulated in four WPs:

- 1) Establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories Network to facilitate common threats detection (WP4).
- 2) Promotion of common procedures in interoperable Generic Preparedness and Risk management among the countries involved in the Network (WP5).
- 3) Enhancement of Mediterranean Early Warning functions allowing alerts and Epidemic intelligence information sharing among EpiSouth countries through the development of interoperability with other Early Warning platforms and especially the European Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) as forecasted by the current EU legislation (WP6).
- 4) Production of a strategic document, with guidelines based on assessments and surveys, aimed at facilitating IHR implementation (WP7).

Nota Bene

The project is led by the Italian National Institute of Health and counselled by an advisory board composed by EC, ECDC, WHO and other international experts. It 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.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Italian National Institute of Health and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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ALGERIA, Alger (National Institute of Public Health);
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (Ministry of Civil Affairs, Sarajevo; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska; Public Health Institute, Mostar, Federation of B&H);
BULGARIA, Sofia (National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases);
CROATIA, Zagreb (Croatian National Institute of Public Health);
CYPRUS, Nicosia (Ministry of Health);
EGYPT, Cairo (Ministry Of Health and Population);
FYROM–Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje (Institute for Health Protection; Clinic of Infectious Diseases);
FRANCE (Institute for Public Health Surveillance, Saint Maurice Cedex; Institute Pasteur, Paris);
GREECE, Athens (Hellenic Center for Diseases Control and Prevention);
ISRAEL (Center for Disease Control, Tel Hashomer; Ministry of Health, Jerusalem);
ITALY (National Institute of Health-ISS, Rome; Teaching Hospital, Padua; National Institute for Infectious Diseases-IRCCS “Lazzaro Spallanzani”, Rome; Intrauniversity Consortium, Casalecchio di Reno; Local Health Unit of Turin, Turin);
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SLOVENIA, Ljubljana (Institute for Public Health);
SPAIN, Madrid (Carlos III Health Institute);
SYRIA, Damascus (Ministry of Health);
TUNISIA, Tunis (Ministry of Health);
TURKEY, Ankara (Ministry of Health; Refik Saydam National Hygiene Center);
WHO-IHR International Health Regulations Coordination, Lyon, France.

Collaborating Institutions

ECDC-European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Stockholm, Sweden;
EUROPEAN UNION DG SANCO Public Health Directorate, Luxembourg;
14 EUROPEAN UNION DG EuropeAid, Brussels, Belgium;
MOH-Ministry of Health, Rome, Italy;
WHO–EMRO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt;
WHO-EURO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark.