

**EPI SOUTH: A NETWORK FOR THE CONTROL OF HEALTH AND SECURITY
THREATS AND OTHER BIO-SECURITY RISKS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION
AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

Project reference:

DEVCO: IFS/2010 / 238-194

SANCO/EAHC: EpiSouth Plus n° 2009 11 05

4th BIENNIAL REPORT

15 April – 14 October 2012

Funded by the



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This 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

PROJECT FACT SHEET

Contract number:	DEVCO: IFS/2010 / 238-194 SANCO/EAHC: EpiSouth Plus n° 2009 11 05
Proposal title:	Episouth: A Network for The Control of Health and Security Threats and Other Bio- Security Risks In The Mediterranean Region and South-East Europe
Acronym:	Episouth Plus

Starting date:	15/10/2010
Duration of the project:	30 months
Reporting period:	15/4 -14/10/2012

Main partner SANCO Grant Agreement: ISS – Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy)
WP1, WP2 and WP7 co-leader

Number of associated partners SANCO Grant Agreement:

1. Institut de Veille Sanitaire (InVS), France **WP6 co-leader**
2. Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain **WP5 co-leader**
3. Institut Pasteur (IP), France **WP4 co-leader**
4. Azienda Sanitaria Locale di Torino (ASLTO1), Italy **WP3 leader**
5. National Center of Infectious & Parasitic Diseases (NCIPD), Bulgaria
6. Hellenic Center for Infectious Diseases Control (HCDCP), Greece
7. Ministry of Health (MoH-CY), Cyprus
8. Ministry of Health (MOH-MT), Malta
9. Institute of Public Health (IPHB), Romania
10. Institute of Public Health (NIPH-IVZ-RS), Slovenia
11. Azienda Ospedaliera di Padova (Padua GH), Veneto Region, Italy
12. Istituto Nazionale Lazzaro Spallanzani (INMI), Italy
13. Cineca Consorzio Interuniversitario (CINECA), Italy
14. Croatian Institut of Public Health (NIPH-HR), Croatia

The contractor for DEVCO Service Contract : ISS – Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy)

WP1, WP2 and WP7 co-leader

Consortium DEVCO Service Contract:

1. Institut de Veille Sanitaire (InVS), France ***WP6 co-leader***
2. Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII), Spain ***WP5 co-leader***
3. Institut Pasteur (IP), France ***WP 4 co-leader***
4. Azienda Sanitaria Locale di Torino (ASLTO1), Italy ***WP3 leader***
5. Azienda Ospedaliera di Padova (Padua GH), Veneto Region, Italy

Collaborative Partners:

1. Institute of Public Health - Tirana, ALBANIA
2. Institut National de Santé Publique - Alger, ALGERIA
3. Ministry of Civil Affairs – Sarajevo, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
4. Public Health Institute of Republika Srpska - Banja Luka, Republika Srpska, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
5. Ministry of Health of Federation of B & H Mostar, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
6. Ministry of Health and Population - Cairo, EGYPT
7. Institute for Health Protection and Clinic for Infectious Diseases - Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM),
8. Ministry of Health and Israel Center for Diseases Control - Tel Hashomer, ISRAEL
9. Ministry of Health Amman, JORDAN
10. National Institute for Public Health of Kosova - Prishtina, KOSOVO UNSCR 1244
11. Ministry of Public Health - Beirut, LEBANON
12. National center for infectious disease prevention and control - Tripoli LIBYA
13. Institute of Public Health - Podgorica, MONTENEGRO ***WP2 co-leader***
14. Ministry of Health - Rabat, MOROCCO
15. Public Health Central Laboratory - Ministry of Health Ramallah, PALESTINE
16. Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr. Milan Jovanovic Batut" - Belgrade, SERBIA
17. Ministry of Health - Damascus, SYRIA

18. Ministère de la Santé Publique - Tunis, TUNISIA **WP1 co-leader**
19. Turkish Public Health Institution - Ankara, TURKEY **WP4 co-leader**
20. MECIDS - ISRAEL, JORDAN and PALESTINE **WP6 co-leader**
21. WHO-LYO/HQ - Lyon, FRANCE **WP7 co-leader**

1. Executive summary

During this last semester of implementation the activities' schedule has been particularly intense in order to reduce the delay gained during the previous months.

The 2nd year work plan and the strategies adopted to fill the needs were shared and agreed with the Project Advisory Board Members in May 2012 and the project activities went ahead accordingly.

After two years of project's implementation a first balance might be done and further details will be also highlighted by the midterm evaluation started in September 2012.

In summary, the strengths of EpiSouth project are also the very same aspects that can delay the implementation of the activities:

i) the double co-financing received simultaneously by DGSANCO and DGDEVCO, which has allowed the concomitant involvement of EU and non-EU partners, needs the respect of double regulations, requirements, expectations etc. which have requested additional managerial efforts. However, this is considered by the partnership still an opportunity to be exploited for EpiSouth as well as for other similar projects/programmes;

ii) the bottom up/collegial approach involved for identifying needs, priorities and gaps has delayed the decision making process but has enhanced the sense of ownership and responsibility of all the partners and amplified the impact of the carried out activities also at national level;

iii) the governance adopted establishes the concomitant involvement of two Institutions/Organisations (EU, non-EU, International) in the WPs leadership: procedures, requirements, timing, local situations etc. had therefore to be considered for both the co-leader Institutions/Organisations involved. This has generated delays but also increased the appropriateness and quality of the activities and the outcomes produced.

For example the strategic presence of WHO in the WP7 co-leadership is a cornerstone of the entire project's approach to IHR strengthening. This however has led to a more complex approval process for the publication of the outputs of the Work Package requiring particular support from WP1 and WP2 in addition to greater work within WP7. Although this delayed the publication of the WP7 reports, the final product elaborated in collaboration with WHO, the leading international Agency for all aspects concerning IHR 2005, has in our view a much greater value and visibility.

Strategic has been also the participation of the Turkish Public Health Institute as co-leader of the WP4, but when the Institute has undergone a complex re-organisation much time had to be devoted to the new set up of the co-leadership.

In consideration of the ultimate goal of the project, aimed at enhancing capacities in the preparedness to cross-board health threats, we deem worthwhile the strategies adopted so far which have allowed to consolidate a Network of 27 Countries in the Mediterranean Basin (including Public Health Institute and Laboratories) and to raise awareness about the critical importance of sharing information, alerts and lessons learn in a framework of trustful collaboration.

During the last year of project's activities efforts should be put in place in order to direct all the achievements towards the sustainability. Surely the Project will not continue as such after its closure, but fundamental functions should be safeguard and ensured for their roles in contributing to the preparedness to cross-board threats to health.

In this direction the words of John DALLI, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, in the closing speech at the Cypriot Presidency Conference on Cross border health threats in the EU and neighbouring countries (Nicosia, Cyprus, 05 July 2012):

“..... Clearly, the ***International Health Regulations are a key tool*** to help build capacities at global level to cope with future threats.

..... In the area of ***communication several platforms are already in place. These include: the Episouth plus network, linking partners in neighborhood countries with the European information system for health threats....***

And

The Report by the WHO Director-General at the 65th WHA - Implementation of the IHR (2005) -

In 27 Mediterranean and south-eastern European countries, there is a continuing effort to establish a network of laboratories, promote common procedures in preparedness and risk management, enhance early warning systems and coordinate surveillance and response for public health emergencies at points of entry.

Main achievements

Cross-cutting achievements

Project's visibility through the new web-site and the participation to several national and international conferences.

Synergies with Networks/Projects: ShipSan; ENVID; VENICE; EurLop.

Valorisation of resources available from other Institutions/Organisations: WHO surveys on IHR core capacities; WHO/EC/ECDC questionnaires; etc.

Collaborations of the EpiSouth Network with International Organizations: Presentation of EpiSouth activities (1st phase) at the EU Conference WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE VACCINATED? Lessons learned from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases Luxembourg, 15-16 October 2012

Work Packages achievements

WP4: Consolidation of the Mediterranean Regional Lab Network (MRLN) and set up of its dedicated area in the EpiSouth website; one-week Training on Dengue and Biosecurity for 17 lab-staff (from 10 non-EU, 1 acceding and 6 EU Countries), IP, Paris- July 2012.

WP5: Final Report on Public Health Preparedness and Response Core Capacity Assessment; set up of Simulation Exercise organisation (schedule, objectives, methodologies etc)

WP6: Cross Border EI Activities; e-week bulletins; Piloting of the EpiSouth/Epis Platform.

WP7: WHO-WP7ST meeting on Points of Entry (PoE) in Lyon: how EpiSouth can contribute to the improvement of communication between PoE and national surveillance systems in the Mediterranean Area.

Constraints

- ***Political instability in the North Africa:*** The situation is slowly improving, but activities were not carried out in these countries.

As reported in the previous reports, the Mediterranean Crises has affected the activities implementation mainly for two aspects:

- some National Governments (i.e. Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Syria) are in a transitional phase and many high level officials and directors are not yet officially appointed;
- meetings and training sessions planned in those countries have to be moved to other less unstable countries.

However, despite the impossibility of organizing events in the Mediterranean Countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Libya, most representatives are very actively participating in the Project activities.

We should acknowledge the commitment to EpiSouth by some Countries which confirm their collaboration even after internal re-organisation of their Institutions and staff (it is the case of the Turkish Public Health Institution which confirm its WP4 Co-leadership with the appointment of new Focal Points after the re-organisation of the Institution and previous staff retirement); even in critical political instability (it is the case of the Syrian Ministry of Health which confirmed its participation and its FPs); even in order to take over new responsibility (it is the case of the Serbian Institute of Public Health which confirmed its availability to co-lead the WP5 with the ISCIII).

-***Delay in the 1st Project Meeting to be held in Paris:*** the 1st Project meeting was not only postponed, but also moved from Paris to Rome under the organization of the ISS.

This has meant an additional task for the Project Coordination which has started the organization procedures at the beginning of September.

Inputs Utilisation

It should be noted that the financial management and funds utilization of this DEVCO service contract resulted quite complicated for all the consortium partners involved which were not so experienced in managing the fees-based contracts.

Unexpected amount of time was dedicated by the Coordination and the Central Administration of ISS to make the partners in line with the contract's requirements.

In several cases the expenses done were and are being reported to DEVCO with several months of delay.

Efficiency versus effectiveness

The EpiSouth approach and strategy, so far deployed, are aimed at guaranteeing and ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation with long term changes which can ensure future sustainability.

In the framework of EpiSouth activities efficiency may appear, at a first view, poor and hampered by obstacles. The standard indicators for efficiency might also mislead.

In fact, the project's success is linked to the concrete participation of the partners which, step by step, will facilitate the countries' sense of ownership and the taking in charge of responsibilities and tasks related to the activities. For examples it is expected that some project's events should be organized and carried out by the non-EU co-leaders in their respective countries.

In fact, to date, the 1st WP6ST Meeting has been organized by the Institute of Public Health of Montenegro (WP2 co-leader) in Budva, the 2nd WP6ST Meeting and the heads of lab Meeting has been organized by the Turkish Public Health Institution (WP4 co-leader) respectively in Istanbul and Ankara.

Some meetings and trainings have been planned to be held in the North Africa countries. The project has tried to wait for a more stable and secure situation in those countries, but it is now confirmed that locations for some events will be reconsidered.

2. Specification of the project:

2.1 General Objective of the project:

To increase health security in the Mediterranean Area and South East Europe by enhancing and strengthening the preparedness to common health threats and other bio-security risks at national and regional levels in the EU Countries of the existing EpiSouth Network in the framework of the International Health Regulations implementation.

The general objective is ensured through the following strategic objectives:

1. To optimise the support to common threat detection by developing a Regional Laboratories Network (in and for the benefit of Europe, particularly for Southern Europe and the Mediterranean area) based on available resources in Mediterranean and Balkans (by mapping them, assessing their diagnostic and confirmation capacity, facilitating rapid access to laboratory facilities, interactions with public health institutions and officials ,based on national reference laboratories from the EU MS, beyond the Institute Pasteur network

2. To facilitate an inter-operational capacity of the EWS among countries in the EU and in the Mediterranean area and South East Europe. The project partners are fully aware of the efforts and resources put in place in these sectors by Regional institutions and mainly EU, ECDC and International Agencies like WHO, especially referring to IHR(2005) requirements.

Nevertheless, the current EpiSouth project has highlighted many sectors where collaboration and interaction is not only useful but extremely needed in this geographical area which encompasses EU, MS and non-MS and three WHO regions.

In particular, the proposed project EpiSouth-plus strengthens the countries' capacity to cope with health threats through concerted and coordinated actions in accordance with contingency/ generic preparedness plans based also on strategic approaches which can facilitate sharing of information, alerts and national procedures between MS and non-MS of the Mediterranean area and the South East Europe, in line also with the existing EU legal acquis for the implementation of the EWRS/IHR.

2.2 Specific objectives of the project

Number	Title	Indicators ¹	WP
1	Establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories network	<p>Process: Number of participants attending the Meeting organised by the Pasteur Institute for Laboratories Representatives out of the total number of those selected</p> <p>Output: Reference procedures available and endorsed by each country for the collaboration between PH Institutions and laboratories of the EpiSouth Network</p> <p>Outcome: number of laboratory investigations/ sample/information exchange carried out between the network of laboratories from EU MS and Non EU countries and include the number of laboratory generated EWRS/IHR notifications of cross border events</p>	WP4
2	Promotion of common procedures in interoperable Generic Preparedness and Risk management among the countries involved in the Network	<p>Process: Two Workshops carried out; Number of countries attending each Workshop out of the 27 countries in the Network.</p> <p>Output: In-depth capacity needs assessment carried out, based on information collected from a sample of participating countries</p> <p>Outcome: Strategic document on Capacity building development regarding Preparedness plans & Risk management procedures available; Examples of collaboration between partners from EU and Non EU countries for the detection of threats and risk</p>	WP5

¹ Amended project's indicators in annex xxvii

		management.	
3	Enhance Mediterranean Early Warning Systems (EWS) allowing alerts and Epidemic intelligence information sharing among EpiSouth countries and developing interoperability with other European Early Warning platforms	<p>Process: Epis based cross-border secured platform developed</p> <p>Output: Reference procedures available and endorsed by countries for information sharing within EpiSouth secured platform and among it and other EW systems</p> <p>Outcome: Number of alerts published and their distribution among the Partners; Number of episodes of collaboration within the network between EU and non-EU countries and between the Network and other EW platforms.</p>	WP6
4	Production of a strategic document, with guidelines based on assessments and surveys, aimed at facilitating IHR implementation	<p>Process: Consensus on the choice of variables to assess the topics identified by the WP and on the design of the questionnaires is reached</p> <p>Output: On-line questionnaire for data collection on national legislations dealing with security and health measures Preliminary report and recommendations on results gained</p> <p>Outcome: Strategic document on national/international issues which may interact/ interfere with IHR implementation available</p>	WP7

3. Overview of activities for the period covered in the 4th interim report M18-M24 (including monitoring details)- Available also in annex I)

WP1. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP1	Activities/Tasks ²	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2nd Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work-plan) ³	Level of achievem ent ⁴	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
	Annual Project Work Plan Final endorsed by SC/AB	M	Plan	M16	M19	M19 (3 months)	100%	SC/AB Meeting postponed		Yes – Annex II
	SC/AB Meeting	M	Agenda & Participants list	np	M19	M19	100%			Yes – Annex III
	SC/AB Report (1 month after SC)	D2	Report	M17	M 20	M21 (4 month)	100%	Delays in receiving feedbacks		Yes – Annex IV
	Sustainability Plan (1st discussion with partners)	M	Plan and presentation at the SC/AB Meeting	M16	M 19	M19 (3 months)	100%			Yes – Annex V
	SANCO interim Report	D1	Report	M17	M 18	M18 (1 month)	100%			Yes – Annex VI http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/interim-and-final-technical-reports
	DEVCO 3rd bi-annual Report	D1	Report	M19	M 19	M21 (2 months)	100%	Some difficulties and delays in		Yes – Annex VII

² In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 2nd year

³ **Green** = as planned; **Red**= delay

⁴ 0-100%

								receiving all the due documentation from the Partners		http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/interim-and-final-technical-reports
No-cost extension request (draft to SANCO and DEVCO)	A	Documentation	np	M23	Expected for M25 (2 months)	100%				
Organization of the 1st Project Meeting	A		M15	M 21-24	Expected for the M26 (11 months)		Location moved from Paris to Rome and organization from InVS to ISS			
Participation to Coordination & WPST Meetings & TC	A	Coordination Meeting & TC: WP4TC (4 May) WP3 coordination (Rome, 7 May) InVS/WP6 PM organization (Paris, 14-15 May) WP6ST Meeting (Istanbul, 4-5 June) Italian MoH PoE Meeting (Rome, 11 July) WP7ST Meeting (Lyon ,16-18 July)	M18-M24	M18-M24	M18-M24	100%				Yes (Refer to WPs's annexes)
DEVCO IfS evaluation (20 April)	A		n.p	n.p.	M18	100%				Yes (internal)
Participation to Conference and seminars			M18-M24	M18- M24	M17	100%				Yes, see WP2

WP2. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP2	Activities/Tasks	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work-plan)	Level of achievem ent	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexe s Availab le
	Web site (both restricted NWA and public area) opening, updating and maintenance	M	Web site available in three languages (English, French and Arabic)	M18-M24	M18-M24	M18-M24	100%	None	NA	http://www.episouthnetwork.org/
	Quarterly Electronic Bulletin	D	Release of the issue N.17 and issue N.18	M20-M23	M20, M23	M20, M23	100%	None	NA	Yes – Annex VIII http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/episouth-electronic-bulletin
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning and stimulating the production of articles for possible publication and technical report	M	1 poster presented at the High Level Conference "EU Health Programmes: results and perspectives", Brussels, Belgium 3 May 2012.	M18-M24	M18- M24	M19	100%	None	NA	Yes – Annex IX http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/ev_20120503_

										prog_en.pdf
Participation to WHO and EU meetings for competent bodies and contact points when requested (in collaboration with WP1)	A	Presentation at the Meeting "Why is it important to be vaccinated? - Lessons learned from outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases", Luxembourg 15-16 October 2012	M18-M24	M18-M24	M24	100%	None	NA	Yes – Annex X http://www.episouthnet-work.org/sites/default/files/outputs/total_conference_15.10.2012.pdf	
Outline and leaflet release and updating	M	Leaflet and outline available	M18-M24	M8-M24	M18-M24	100%	None	NA	Yes Annex XI http://www.episouthnet-work.org/sites/default/files/outputs/episouth_plus_leaflet_13_november_2012_-_rev_9.pdf ; http://www.episouthnet-work.org/sites/default/files/outputs/episouth_plus_leaflet_13_november_2012_-_rev_9.pdf	

										es/outputs/2012_november_-_episouth_plus_outline.pdf
	Press releases for the main project-related events	O	2 press releases (PR) announcing the WP6 Steering Team Meeting (Istanbul, Turkey, 4-6/6/2012) and the second Steering Committee and the Advisory Board Meeting (Brussels, Belgium, 29-30/5/2012)		Not Planned	M20	100%	None	NA	Yes – Annex XII http://www.episouthnet.work.org/sites/default/files/outputs/enpi-ec-press_release_april_2012.pdf ; http://www.episouthnet.work.org/sites/default/files/outputs/enpi-ec-press_release_june_2012.pdf ;

WP3. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP3	Activities/Tasks	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd year Work- plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work-plan)	Level of achievem ent	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexe s Availab le
	Midterm evaluation ToR with WP1	A	ToR	n.p.	M21	M21	100%			Yes – annex XIII
	Midterm evaluation implementation (external contractor)	A	Tools	n.p.	M23-M24	M23-M24	80%	Dead line for data collection set at 15 November 2012		Yes – Annex XIV
	Mid-Term Evaluation Draft Report (for discussion at the Workshop on project outputs evaluation)	M	Report	M16	M24	Expected for M25 (8 months)		Preliminary draft report due for M25 in consideration of the postponing of Project Meeting from October to December 2012		
	Workshop on project outputs evaluation and sustainability plan (during 1st Project Meeting)	A	Minutes/Report	M16	M24	Expected for M26 (9 months)		Project Meeting postponed from October to December 2012		

WP4. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP4	Activities / Tasks	Outputs/ Deliverables / Milestones / Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd year Work- plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work- plan)	Level of achievem ent	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Availabl e
	Identification of needs of laboratories for diagnoses of priority diseases in the Region	Report	Number of returned questionnaires (100%)	M15	M17-23	M25 (10m)	90%	Delays in the response to the questionnaires from the laboratories	In process of validation.	yes - annex XV
	Participation to the 15 th meeting of the EBSA	Poster + abstract		np	np	M20	100%			Yes Annex XVI http://www.episout.hnetwork.org/sites/default/files/output_s/poster_presented_to_15th_conference_ebsa_2012.pdf#overlay=content/presentations-conferences-workshop-s-etc-1
	One-week training module at IP Paris for 26 lab-staff (17 non-EU participants)	Report + course documents	Labs participation >60% (of number of MRLN members)(77%); Satisfactory rate $\geq 4/5$	M21	M21	M21	100%			Yes – Annex XVI.a

			(4.85 for theoretical and 4.86 for practical)							
	Stages at IP or other Institutes of MRLN			M23-M30	M23-M30		0%	Internal reorganisation of IP Dengue/WN teams.	Identification of a host lab within IP or MRLN	

WP5. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP5	Activities/Tasks	Outputs/Deliverables/Milestones/Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd year Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work-plan)	Level of achievement	Justification/Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
	Public Health Preparedness and Response Core Capacity Assessment. Draft Report			np	M20	M20	100%			
	Public Health Preparedness and Response Core Capacity Assessment. Final Report	M	Report Available online	M8	M21	M21 (13 M)	100%	Delay in hiring the training expert when project started. Difficulties in obtaining responses from countries many of them had socio-political instability. The response period was extended in order to increase the response rate.		YES-annex XVII http://www.episouthnet.org/sites/default/files/outputs/wp5_ph-prp-assessment_final_version_0.pdf

WP5	Activities/Tasks	Outputs/Deliverables/Milestones/Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd year Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay towards original Work-plan)	Level of achievement	Justification/Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
	WP5 Steam first meeting	A	- 1 st Project Meeting Agenda	np	M24	Expected for M26		1 st Project Meeting postponed for two times		
	Link with Spanish FETP & EPIET			M18-M24	M18-M24	M18-M24	100%			

WP6. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP6	Activities/Tasks ⁵	Outputs/Deliverables/Milestones/Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work-plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay)	Level of achievement ⁶	Justification/Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
	Epidemic Intelligence activities	A	-	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	100%	-	-	
	EpiSouth Weekly Epidemic Intelligence (eWEB)	D	bulletins	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	100%	-	-	Yes – annex XVIII http://www.episouthnet.work.org/content/episouth-weekly-epi-

⁵ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 2nd year

⁶ 0-100%

										bulletin-e-web
	Management / animation of the secure platform	M	Alerts posted	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	M1 – M30	100%	-	-	
	2 nd WP6 steering team meeting	A	Meeting Report	np	M20	M20	100%	-	-	Yes – annex XIX
	1 st and 2 nd weeks Epidemic Intelligence stage at InVS (Paris)	M	stage	M10, M22	np in the 2 nd year	Expected at M29 (19 months)	0%	Activities delayed due to the freezing, not part of the priorities.	-	-
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning	A	Abstracts submitted, poster and oral presentations	M18-M24	M18-M24	M20	100%	2 posters have been presented at the International Congress of Infectious Diseases (ICID) (under SANCO budget)	-	Yes – Annex XX & XXI
	Collaboration with other WP activities	A	WNV Note 2010-2011	M18-M24	M18-M24	M18 –M24	100%	-Epis-Episouth platform: WP1, WP2, CINECA -WN note: WP4 - WP7 meeting	-	Yes – annex XXII http://www.episouthnet.work.org/sites/default/files/bulletin_file/note_western_episouth_2010_2011_july_2012.pdf

	Collaboration with EU/ECDC for the EpiSouth/EpiS secured platform interop. with other EW system: Collaboration with ECDC: Plan of Action (PoA), face-to-face meeting; EW platform evaluation.	A	Testing of the new platform and webex teleconferences.	M11-M16	M13-M24	M13-M24 (8 months)	100%	-On-going collaboration with ECDC EpiS-Episouth platform: WP1, WP2, CINECA	-	
	1st EpiSouth Project Meeting	A	Plan	M16	M24	Expected at M26 (10 months)	0%	Location moved from Paris to Rome and organization from InVS to ISS		
	Launching of EpiSouth/EpiS Platform (after 1st EpiSouth Meeting)	M	Platform	M20	M28	Expected at M30 (10 months)				

WP7. Overview of 4th six-month activities

WP7	Activities/Tasks	Outputs/ Deliverables /Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per original Work- plan	Achievement date as per approved 2 nd Work-plan	Date of achievement (Month/s of delay)	Level of achievement	Justification / Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
	i) Preliminary report of first investigation	M	Report	M15	Available as internal version since M9	M9	100%			Yes (internal version)
	ii) Final report of first investigation		Report	n.p.	M20	Expected at M26		- problems of copywriter to be solved	Copywriter agreement to be signed with WHO (at the signature)	

	WP7 ST consulted in WHO expert consultation (July 2012) and report finalized.	A	Report	Activity not included in original wp	M21	M21	100%			Yes –annex XXIV
	Draft WHO PoE Guidelines		Draft	n.p.	M24	Presentation by WHO-Lyon expected for M26				
	Discussion and validation of preliminary results and preliminary discussions on guideline formulation (during the first project meeting)	A	Meeting Report	n.p.	M24	Expected at the 1st Project Meeting (M26)		Modified by a new approach (see the WP7 activities §)		

3. Technical implementation of the project

3.1 Activities related to Horizontal Work Packages:

WP1: Management of the project

Activities undertaken

- partnership
- management structure
- internal communication
- communication strategy
- Problems encountered
- How were problems resolved

During the 4th six months period the coordination focussed principally on the following aspects:

i) coordination meetings: aimed at monitoring activities implementation and discussing critical issues with the WPs co-leaders and project's stakeholders

- InVS-Paris, 15 May with WP2 and WP6 addressing organization of the 1st Project Meeting in Paris, expected in October 2012 (*Annex XXIV- Meeting Agenda*);
- Italian MoH-Rome, 18 May: EpiSouth coordination met the responsible for EpiSouth at Italian MoH and AB representative addressing issues of interest to be discussed during the SC/AB Meeting expected on 29 and 30 May;
- WP6ST Meeting, 4-5 June in Istanbul (see WP6 activities for further details);
- Italian MoH-Rome, 9 July: EpiSouth coordination met the Italian IHR contact point for discussing issues related to Surveillance at PoE in Italy in view of the incoming related meeting at WHO in Lyon (*Annex XXV- Presentation discussed at the meeting*).
- WP7ST Meeting & WHO Expert Consultation to develop Guidance on coordination between points of entry and national surveillance systems- Lyon, 16-18 July (see WP7 activities for further details)

ii) coordination tele- (TC) and video-conferences(VC): aimed at planning activities and discussing specific issues of activities in progress

- TC with WP4 team on 4 May & 2 October, (see WP4 activities for further details);
- TC with WP5 on 28 September (see WP5 activities for further details);
- VC with WP3, WP2 and midterm evaluation contractor on 9 October for discussing project's indicators revision to be inserted in the request of project's amendment for DG SANCO and DG DEVCO (see WP3 activities for further details)

iii) organization of the 2nd Steering Committee(SC) and 1st Advisory Board(AB) Meeting at DGDEVCO in BXL (29-30 May)

The SC members met for the 1st time the AB members in Brussels hosted by DG DEVCO (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/episouth-network-advisory-board>)

All the Members of the AB were present or represented, except the Institute Pasteur of Tunisia and the Kirikkale University of Turkey.

The main issues discussed during the meeting are reported here below:

IAB. Project overview

Project Status and present achievements

2012 Plan and no-cost extension

2AB. Present challenges and opportunities

The Mediterranean Regional Laboratory Network: expected developments (WP4)

Capacity building: Simulation Exercise preparation (WP5)

Early Warning EpiSouth/Epis platform (WP6 team)

IHR Capacities for Mediterranean Region (WP7)

Copyrights issues (WP2)

Project Evaluation: DEVCO ROM, DEVCO IfS, Internal Mid term Evaluation and External Evaluation (WP3 and Coordination)

3AB. Paris Project Meeting, mid October 2012

Technical contents

Organization and dates, Participants and guests

4AB. Collaboration framework with EU, International Organizations and Networks WHO

collaboration with Networks for IHR-2005 Implementation

EU Neighborhood Policy & Union for Mediterranean

Centers of Excellences

Mediterranean EPIET

TEPHINET

GHSAG Lab & EULab P4

5AB. EpiSouth developments after the end of the Project: stakeholders priorities and Future Opportunities

Round Table with all the participants

Consolidation of suggestions and advises from the AB

The Meeting has clearly discussed the reasons for some delays in the project's implementation and the need for tuning the strategic approaches of some WPs.

DGSANCO and DGDEVCO representatives have agreed on the request of a no-cost extension of the project until December 2013 to cope with the identified delays and they recommended to include in the amendment request the WPs strategies adopted for replying to the identified needs.

In addition the technical contents and the organization of the 1st EpiSouth Meeting to be held at InVS in October have been presented and discussed.

For further details see the *Annex III- and Annex IV. Presentations are available in the AB Members Area*

(https://nwa.episouthnetwork.org/index.php?tab=3&id_area=2076&topic=Meeting)

iv) organization of the 3rd Steering Committee(SC), 2nd Advisory Board(AB) Meeting and 1st Project Meeting at Italian MoH, Rome (4-7 December)

The 3rd Steering Committee(SC), 2nd Advisory Board(AB) Meeting and 1st Project Meeting were expected to be organized by InVS, with the ISS collaboration, and to be held at InVS in Paris.

Unexpectedly, starting from July InVS shared with the Project Coordination some concerns regarding InVS administrative and logistic constraints which might have implied the postponing of the Meetings to the 2013 first quarter.

Considering that this postponing would have affected greatly the project's implementation schedule and related expected results, ISS verified the possibility of taking in charge the organization of the Meetings.

Finally, in agreement with InVS, EAHC/SANCO and DEVCO, it was decided to move the Meetings under the ISS organization and their location from Paris to Rome. Therefore new suitable dates for the meetings were identified as per 4-7 December 2012. From September the Project coordination at ISS was therefore very busily involved in the organization of the planned meetings.

v) Project's Organisation and Governance (for details see also the Project Organisation Document at

http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/episouth_plus_project_organization_updated_14-12-2011.pdf

As reported in the previous report, the project's Organisation and Governance relies on the official document "EpiSouth Plus Project Organization" which is available since last March 2011.

During this reporting period in particular:

- the dedicated area for the **Mediterranean Regional Laboratory Network** (MRLN) has been activated and starting from October 2012 Project's documents have been uploaded in the website area;

- updating and consolidation of **country focal points** in accordance with the set criteria.

vi) Argumentation with DG SANCO and DEVCO on WP6 criteria for implementation

As reported in the previous reports, finally the debate related to the legal implications in the use of the EpiSouth secured platform was over and in January 2012 the WP6 activities "restarted".

The long period of debate has created delays and the coordination, in collaboration with all the WPs leadership, has revised the project's plan in order to speed up the implementation.

The revised Work Plan has been shared for approval during the Advisory Board Meeting of May 2012 together with the request of a project no-cost extension which has set the project's end on the 31 December 2012.

vi) DEVCO IfS Evaluation

In the framework of the European Commission's Instrument for Stability (IfS) second evaluation, to assess the results of the activities implemented under the IfS, priority 1 since 2010, a day meeting on EpiSouth was held in Rome at ISS on the 20 April 2012.

The IfS P1 programme responds to a broader set of EU strategies and policies in the areas of assistance and cooperation, partnership building, safety and security. It closely relates to the objectives set out in pertinent EU strategies and policies, in particular the European Security Strategy of 2003 (reviewed in 2008).

The final evaluation report was finalized in November 2012 but not yet officially disseminated⁷.

Interesting aspects/lessons learnt of EpiSouth Project have been reported in the final report mainly in the field of relevance, monitoring and evaluation and sustainability.

⁷ Second Evaluation of IfS, Priority 1 (CBRN) results, Service Contract No. 2011/271644- Instrument for Stability - Priority 1- Second Evaluation - Final Report, November 2012

vii) *The support of the Azienda Ospedaliera of Padua to the activities of Project Coordination*

As mentioned in the previous biannual reports, Azienda Ospedaliera of Padua is involved as collaborating partner in the above-mentioned project to support the coordinator ISS in the implementation of WP1 coordination, with particular reference to the organization of project meetings and the drafting of the relating minutes and reports as well as in the implementation of the WP4 “Mediterranean Regional Laboratories Network”.

In the concerned period - from 01/04/2012 to 14/10/2012 - the Azienda Ospedaliera, Padua carried out administrative procedures for the submission of the requested administrative documents - DG-DEVCO Third and Fourth Interim Progress Reports, participated in the planned WP4 and WP5 scientific activities and had regular contacts with the project coordinator.

Concerning the scientific issues, Dr. Monia Pacenti - Senior Scientist of the Microbiology and Virology Department of Padua University Hospital – was particularly involved in the scientific activities of both WP4 and WP5 as Focal Point and Member of the WP4 Steering Team. In particular, relating to WP4 she participated in the “EpiSouth Training on Dengue and Biosafety in the laboratory” organized by the Institute Pasteur from the 2nd July to the 7th July 2012 in Paris. The learning objectives of the training were the following: a) to explain the importance of a quality management system; b) understand the needs for appropriate management of specimens; c) discuss relationship of the quality model to ISO 15189 standards; d) know the international regulations on shipment of infectious substances; e) obtain an international training certificate for shipment of infectious specimens; f) explain the importance of biosafety during the manipulation of specimens; g) understand necessity for an appropriate biological risk assessment in diagnostic laboratories; h) be exposed to international CWA recommendations on biorisk.

During the 5 days training course Dr. Pacenti could perform the Infectious Substance Shipping Training and get the International Certificate for Shipment for different categories of infectious substances. Furthermore, she could attend the Laboratory Associated Infections (LAI) section, which was of particular interest for Padua GH laboratories and could learn how to refer data about an infectious outbreak such as West Nile virus outbreak in Greece in 2010.

The training course was a great occasion for all expert scientists of reference laboratories to exchange laboratory protocols and troubleshooting of different assays to be used for diagnosis of Dengue Virus infection. During the practical section Dr. Pacenti and the other participants could perform the tests by their own. Finally, she could take part in the discussion about on how to realize the next training meeting about West Nile Virus infection, in particular concerning the most interesting diagnostic aspects of this infection which is of interest of almost all Mediterranean Countries.

Dr Monia Pacenti examined a Risk Assessment Form and a manual of the National University of Singapore entitled “Safety and Health Guidelines for Field Researchers” sent by the Institut Pasteur in Paris (WP4 Team) as a template and guideline for field research and investigation in order to verify if they could be of use for Padua GH laboratory activities.

The mentioned course as well as the newly established contacts are deemed a remarkable opportunity for Padua GH laboratories to exchange experiences and start building a fruitful cooperation with EU and non EU laboratories belonging to the network.

The Logistic and Conference Organizer supported the Senior Scientist in logistic, organizational and administrative procedures in particular relating to the preparation for her participation in the WP4 Laboratory Training and the administrative procedures relating to her participation in the training.

She also monitored all project activities, documents and events by supporting especially the Senior Scientist in dealing with project documentation and contacts with the Project Co-ordinator.

She collaborated with the Project Administrator on administrative procedures and contacts with the concerned administrative offices of Azienda Ospedaliera relating to the preparation and sending of the Third Interim Progress Report (Reporting Period 15/10/2011 – 14/04/2012) and other administrative issues. She kept regular contacts with the Project Coordinator.

Activities planned for the next period

In the incoming period of implementation (November 2012- April 2013) the coordination will focus especially on:

- the organisation of the 1st EpiSouth Project Meeting (including the 3rd Steering Committee and the 2nd Advisory Board Meeting;
- planning of the 3rd year of project activities (with particular focus on the WP6/InVs activities which will terminate in April 2013)
- finalisation of the project's amendment aimed at extending the project's implementation until the 31 December 2013

In addition, the following main activities will be addressed by the Coordination in the next period:

Support to the finalisation of the Project Midterm Evaluation
DEVCO 5th bi-annual Report
Development of the Sustainability strategy in collaboration with WP3
Participation to Coordination & WPST Meetings
Participation to Conference and seminars

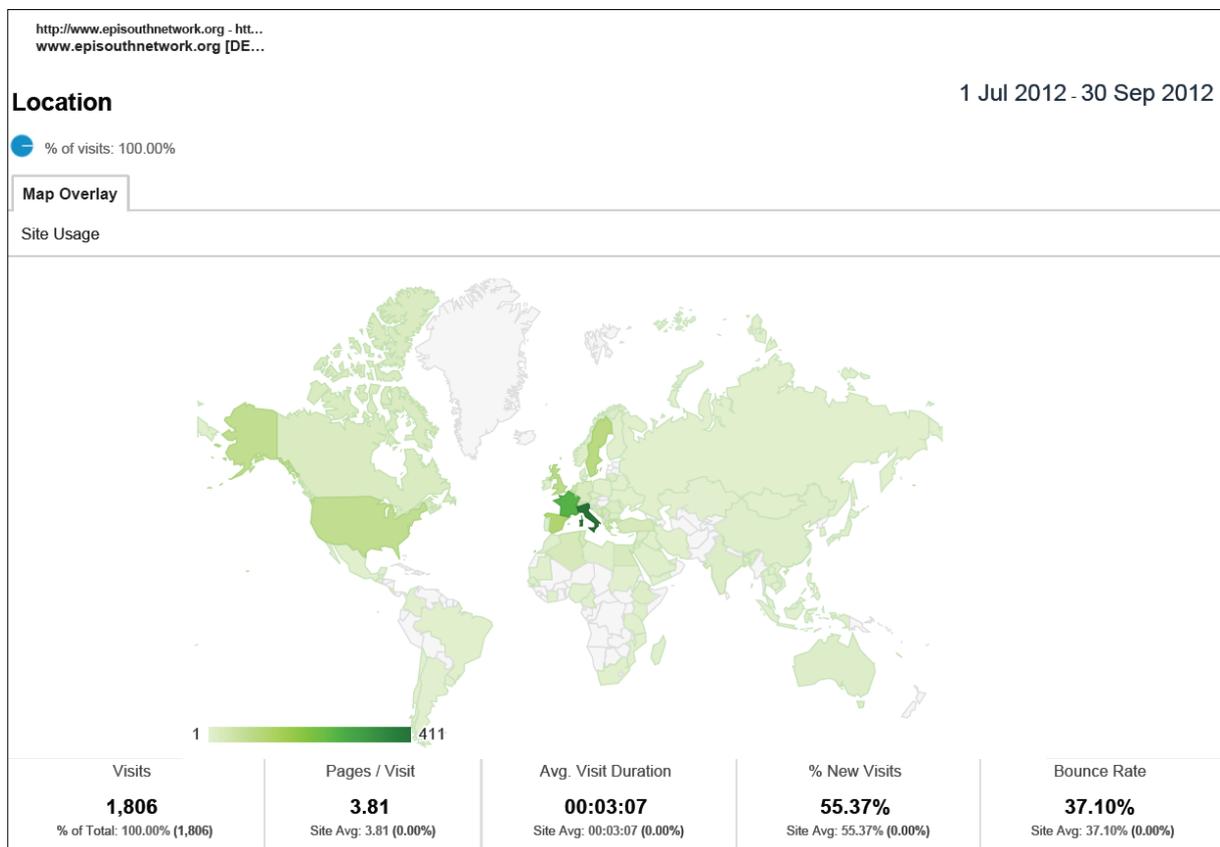
WP2: Dissemination strategy

Dissemination plan available no yes (see previous report)

Activities undertaken

- stakeholder analysis / target group identification
- dissemination content
- dissemination means
- Problems encountered
- How were problems resolved

The [Project's web site](#) (both public and members' area) has been continuously updated and the [quarterly electronic bulletin](#) summarising the new contents presented in the web site has been released in June and September 2012. [Quarterly statistics](#) concerning the web-site usage are available on-line.



In the fourth semester of activities, the EpiSouth-Plus Project was presented at the High Level Conference "[EU Health Programmes results and perspectives](#)", which was held in Brussels on 3 May 2012.

Moreover, specific network activities carried out in the previous phase of the project were presented at the Meeting "[Why is it important to be vaccinated? - Lessons learned from outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases](#)", which was held in Luxembourg on 15-16 October 2012.

The [leaflet](#) describing the project's organization and, as well as the [outline](#) with a more extended description of the project activities, was updated when necessary and made available

to partners for dissemination purposes in both the members' area and the public area of the web site.

Finally, although initially not planned, two press releases related to the project's events were disseminated in June 2012. In particular, one press release concerning the [WP6 Steering Team Meeting \(Istanbul, Turkey, 4-5 June 2012\)](#) and another one concerning the [second Steering Committee and the Advisory Board Meeting \(Brussels, Belgium, 29-30 May 2012\)](#).

During this semester of activities particular support has been done to WP6, CINECA and ECDC in order to facilitate the development of the EpiSouth Platform in the EpiS/ECDC environment.

Activities planned for the next period

- Both the restricted members' area and the public area of the web-site will be continuously updated.
- The issue N.19 and the issue N.20 of the quarterly electronic bulletin will be released in December 2012 and March 2013, respectively.
- Abstracts describing the EpiSouth activities will be submitted and possibly presented at conferences/meetings/workshops considered as relevant for the visibility of the Network
- When requested, the network will participate to WHO, EU and other meetings for competent bodies and contact points.
- The leaflet and outline describing the EpiSouth-Plus project will be updated each time substantial changes in the project implementation will occur.
- Preparation of a press release in concomitance with the first project meeting which will be held in Rome in December 2012.

WP3: Evaluation of the project

Evaluation plan available no yes (see previous report)

Activities undertaken

- data collection for process evaluation
- analysis of process evaluation data
- suggestions for improvement
- data collection for effect evaluation (baseline)
- analysis of effect evaluation data

Regarding the Milestones due by the WP3 during the first 18 months of project implementation the following aspects should be mentioned:

i) Work packages (WPs) evaluation questionnaires

As reported in the previous report, the WP1 and WP3 are constantly monitoring the activities through the monitoring sheets filled in by the WPs leaders with the bi-annual reporting to DEVCO (*see annex I*).

This methodology was shared and agreed with the SC and AB members during the Meeting held in Brussels in May 2012.

The revision and discussion with the WPs leaders of the monitoring sheets are done during the coordination meetings.

As recommended by the ROM Monitoring Report and AB members the project's indicators have been revised also with the support of the external evaluator who started the midterm evaluation of EpiSouth in September 2012. The revised indicators (*see annex XXVII*) have been inserted in the project's amended documentation to be approved by DEVCO and SANCO.

ii) Networking evaluation questionnaires

These questionnaires were due for the M15, because the planning was to have them filled in by the EpiSouth FPs who were expected to participate in the 1st Project Meeting (planned for the M16), as done in the previous phase of EpiSouth Project. The data collected should have been integrated in the Midterm evaluation Report.

It has to be noted (as reported in §iv under WP1), that 1st Project meeting has been postponed to December 2012 (M26) and therefore the Networking evaluation questionnaires should have been prepared for the M25.

Considering the delay, it was decided to include the evaluation of the Network development in the midterm evaluation as reported in the paragraph below.

iii) Midterm evaluation report

It has to be noted that the mid-term evaluation report was due for the M18. In particular, it had been planned to have a midterm evaluation draft report to be discussed in a session during the 1st Project Meeting. The 1st PM has been postponed to December 2012. Consequently also the Midterm evaluation was postponed also considering the 6 months delay of the project implementation.

In addition, as reported in the previous report, the ASLTO1 (WP3 leader) has had unexpected problems in having the contract with the non-key expert signed. The ASLTO1 permanent staff (ie Dott. Giuseppe Salamina) will continue to carry out the monitoring, but he is not in the position to carry out the midterm and final evaluations.

It has been internally discussed to commit the task to an external evaluator to be selected among staff of Projects/Networks which are implementing activities in the same EpiSouth's domains.

During the AB Meeting the proposal has been discussed and accepted and the Coordination, with the support of the WP3, has proceed accordingly.

ToR has been prepared (*see the annex XXVII*), shared with EAHC/SANCO and DEVCO Project officers and sent to five potential candidates.

The University of Thessaly (Greece) has replied to the call, three have refused, one has not reply.

The midterm evaluation process started in September 2012.

Activities planned for the next period

Support to the Midterm evaluation methodology and tools preparation
Monitoring sheet (to be filled in with the DEVCO 5th biannual report)
Workshop on project outputs evaluation (during 1st Project Meeting)
Mid-Term Evaluation Report (after Workshop on project outputs evaluation)

3.2 Activities related to project objectives (core work packages)

Objective 1: Establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories network (WP4)

Methodology applied as planned
Involvement of partners and target groups
Methodology and activities

Methodology applied as planned
Involvement of partners and target groups

Methodology and activities

Non-key expert

The non-key expert (Sabah Boufkhed) has been hired and active for the project from beginning of July 2011.

WP4 Steering team

WP4 Steering Team (ST) has been identified and consolidated. The WP4 ST consists of representatives from Croatia, Cyprus, Italy INMI, Italy Padua-GH, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. They have received all the reports of the recent activities and a conference call is planned for November 2012.

Exchanges between WP co-leaders

The Turkish co-leader (Handan Kalaycioglu, Refik Saydam National Public Health Agency) has been changed in June, until that time regular exchanges by e-mails and phone calls have been established. Each question, direction to follow and decision was discussed and validated by both co-leaders. The nomination of a new co-leader has been recently done.

Activities

Mediterranean Regional Laboratory Network (MRLN)

As reported in the previous report, during the meeting with the Expert Committee (13 January 2012), from the 29 Laboratories proposed by 20 countries, 20 laboratories have been identified to be part of the MRLN core group. The other laboratories (9) are involved as associated laboratories (Veterinary + other Human labs).

Two more laboratories from 2 other EpiSouth countries were added to the core group after the Expert meeting due to delayed response. One more laboratory has joined the MRLN on September 2012. To date, the MRLN involves 23 laboratories (1 per country). (*See annex XXVIII*)

Mapping of the existing biological expertise

First, an inventory of the existing networks in the Mediterranean and the Balkans Region has been performed. Second, all national reference laboratories or related laboratories (Virology) on the priority issues of each country of the region were listed. All the National influenza centres (WHO NIC) and the Institut Pasteur International Network members of the area were also included in the list. A regular update is made. (*See annex XXIX*).

Identification of laboratory needs

Needs of laboratories selected for the MRLN were first identified from their answers to the Questionnaire on Laboratory capacities (part 1) and from discussion during the Meeting with the Heads of laboratory. This first assessment has been completed with the analysis of their answers to the Questionnaire on laboratory capacities - Part 2 and with discussion during training. The results of the analysis of the questionnaire part 1 & 2 are shown in the annex XV. The report is in preparation.

Presentation of a poster at the 15th annual conference of the European biosafety association (EBSA) on 12 & 13 June 2012, Manchester (UK)

See Annex XVI

First training session on “Dengue and Biosafety in the lab”

From 02 to 06 July 2012, 17 trainees have attended the 1st training session on Dengue and Biosafety in the lab (over 22 member laboratories at date). Two candidates could not attend because they could not get a Visa for France (Libya and Turkey). The course has been organised with the help of Philippe Dubois previously WHO Biosafety and Quality trainer and member of the Urgent Response to Biological Threats (CIBU, IP) and Philippe Desprès with the POLARBO structure hosted in the Flavivirus-Host Molecular Interaction (FHMI, IP). After the Meeting with the Heads of Laboratory, it has been the second step in building up and strengthening links between laboratories within the EpiSouth MRLN.

The training combined theoretical and practical courses concerning biosafety and laboratory diagnosis of dengue. Trainees worked in pairs during theoretical and practical courses. They have also compared results from different available commercial diagnostic kits for dengue diagnosis in order to address limits and differences of the methods. This, in order to have the most complete overview of the dengue diagnosis possibilities and to allow the trainees to implement in their home situation the most adapted testing. (*See annex XVI.a*)

Coordination with other projects and activities

The use of the EpiSouth website for the MRLN has been discussed with WP2 for the members of the Laboratory Network which led to the creation of a private area for the MRLN members on September 2012.

Synergies with Networks/Projects

Collaboration with ENIVD and EurLop

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Identification of the laboratories of the MRLN

List of the MRLN core group and associated laboratories

Poster presented at the 15th annual conference of the European biosafety association (EBSA)

1st training session on ‘Dengue and Biosafety in the lab’

Report of the 1st training session on ‘Dengue and Biosafety in the lab’

Course documents available on the website (WP4 ENWA + MRLN ENWA)

Problems encountered

To organise training at the IP there is an important administrative part and there are some legal constraints concerning the contents of the courses that have to be taken into consideration.

Internal reorganisation of the Turkish Refik Saydam National Public Health Institute (WP4 co-leader).

Internal reorganisation of Dengue and arboviruses activities within the IP.

Due to the political situation in Tunisia, it is not possible to organise the 2nd training session at the Institut Pasteur in Tunis and the place has to be redefined.

How were problems resolved

According to the identified problems, the agenda was rescheduled and the participation of the non-key expert will help with the planning and execution of the activities.

After different consultations, WP4 has discussed with Maria Rosaria Capobianchi to organise the 2nd training at INMI. Discussion is pending and could lead to the organisation of the 2nd training at INMI in Rome.

Activities planned for the next period

WP4ST teleconference

Participation to the 1st project meeting in Rome (including a 2nd meeting with the Heads of lab)

2nd one-week training module at INMI (to be confirmed) in March or April 2012 for one lab staff per laboratory member of the MRLN “West Nile and Biosafety II in the lab”

Organisation of an EQA probably in partnership with ENIVD

Stages

Visit of experts on the field

Objective 2: *Promotion of common procedures in interoperable Generic Preparedness and Risk management among the countries involved in the Network (WP5)*

Methodology applied as planned

Involvement of partners and target groups

Coordination with other projects or activities

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Problems encountered

How were problems resolved

1. Activities foreseen for previous months:

a) Inter- Institutional agreements. The process for finding a Co-leader for jointly leading the capacity building WP has continued during this period. Algerian National Focal Points informed us about their demission as EPISOUTH FP. Institut National de Santé Public of Algeria did not designate any other FP during the subsequent months. Several institutions were then contacted in order to concretise the co-leadership (Egypt: several tries without success; Lebanon decline our offer because of neighbouring situation: civil war in Syria and its impact on their own country).

Serbia, Greece, Malta, Romania, Morocco were also considered as alternatives.

Serbia has being contacted and Institut of Public Health of Serbia, “Dr. Milan Jovanovic Batut” accepted to launch the process of Collaboration Agreement Signature. It will be reached around mid December 2012. Once the Agreement enters into force, several activities will be launched: two one-week-modules is one of the most important.

b) Procurement of the 2nd training expert is still pending. Hiring personnel implies new internal procedures which are being implemented during the last months.

c) Second Steering Committee Meeting & Advisory Board held in Brussels in May 2012. Achievements, obstacles, solutions found of each WP’s were exposed. The extension period through an amendment was also discussed during the meeting.

Scheduled activities:

d) In depth-core capacity needs assessment. Final Report.

An in depth –core capacity needs assessment was launched in the last third of 2011 in order to determine the current situation of Emergency Preparedness Response in the EpiSouth region as perceived by an institutional point of view and identifying training needs

- Developing a comprehensive map of resources, experiences and capacities at institutional level in situations of occurrence of a possible Public Health threat that might cause a transnational PH emergency within the EpiSouth countries

- Identifying existing gaps and common training needs of all project partners in order to improve transnational cooperation in situations of PH emergencies

- Providing input for an upcoming simulation exercise

The process of collecting information from countries was extended in order to increase the rate response. Face to face interviews were held during the Madrid workshop, and additional questionnaires were included during an extension period.

The final report last draft was sent to the WP5 Steering Team in May and the final report was finished on July. (*Annex XVII*)

e) Simulation Exercise (SE) preparation

As part of the WP5 activities, SE preparation continued during the reported period.

Inputs provided by countries through the Questionnaire and the discussion groups of the Madrid Workshop allowed going ahead with the planned steps.

Proposed strategy for SE implementation was prepared during the period. (*Annex XXIX*)

f) Strategic Document on Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

Taking into account the results of the Survey conducted, a major gap was found in the Region. No Generic Preparedness Plans are available in the region. As WP5 we decided that the Strategic Document to be developed during the project will be a Tool for Generic Preparedness & Response Plans (EPREP Tool) development. With the main aim of facilitating the development of a Generic Preparedness Plan for the Episouth participating countries EPREP Tool is being developing (*Annex XXX*)

2. Other activities undertaken

a) WHO/WP7ST Meeting for Points of Entry-PoE (Lyon, July 2012)

WP5 participated in the WHO/WP7 ST Meeting held in Lyon for discussing common points related to PoE and the possibility of testing the WHO guide in the EPISOUTH Region.

b) Establishing links with the EPIET and Field Epidemiology Training Programmes.

c) Participation in the consultancy related the MEDITERRANEAN EPIET (Vérier du Lac– France, April 2012)

3. *Milestones and deliverables achieved*

a) Final version of the Questionnaire (Uploaded in the web site)

4. *The support of the Instituto Carlos III in activities of the WP7-WHO*

Instituto de Salud Carlos III is involved as collaborating partner in the WP7 for supporting the development of the WHO Guidance on coordination of surveillance and response between Points of Entry (PoE) and national systems in order to facilitate IHR implementation.

Since 15/01/2012 to 14/10/2012 - the ISCIII supports the WP7 through the involvement of Dr. Carmen Varela Martínez as expert in PoE. Dr Varela supported the elaboration of objectives, table of contents of the guide and provide expertise for the aspects to be discussed during the Lyon –WHO meeting held in Lyon in July 2012.

Activities planned for the next period

- Agreement of Collaboration with the new Non EU –Co- leader
- 1st Steering Team Meeting at the 1st Project Meeting in Rome
- Continuing the preparation of Simulation Exercise
- Continuing the preparation of the EPREP Strategic Document
- 2nd workshop and capacity session in Madrid & Material for Workshop
- Organisation of two training sessions in non-EU Country

Objective 3: ***Enhance Mediterranean Early Warning Systems (EWS) allowing alerts and Epidemic intelligence information sharing among EpiSouth countries and developing interoperability with other European Early Warning platforms (WP6)***

Involvement of partners and target groups

Coordination with other projects or activities

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Problems encountered

How were problems resolved

- The WP6 is working in close collaboration with ECDC for the development of the Epis-EpiSouth platform. Regular email exchanges, phone calls and teleconferences are organized with ECDC. ECDC was also invited at the 2nd WP6 Steering team meeting, and half a day was dedicated to an ECDC team member to present the Epis-EpiSouth platform.

- In addition, WP6 team is continuously collaborating with the ECDC epidemic intelligence team in the framework of epidemic intelligence activities.

- ECDC and WHO have full access to EpiSouth secure platform information shared by EpiSouth countries. WP6 is actively collaborating with both institutions for the sharing of relevant cross-border health information.

- Despite the fact that so far no formal agreement has been elaborated with the co-leader Mecids, this partner was involved in any main activity, including presentations, submission of abstracts, and organisation of the 2nd WP6 Steering team meeting in Istanbul.

Coordination with other WPs' activities

- The WP4 was involved in the elaboration of the note on West Nile virus circulation in EpiSouth countries and neighbouring areas, seasons 2010 and 2011. Actually, data collected by the WP6 about the WNV circulation were consolidated with data provided by the WP4 about WNV laboratory capacities.

- ECDC, WP1, WP2 and CINECA are strongly involved in the development of the EpiS-EpiSouth platform.

- WP1, WP2 attended the 2nd WP6 Steering Team meeting, held in Istanbul on 4th and 5th June 2012.

- The WP6 attended the EpiSouth Steering Committee meeting in Brussels on 29th and 30th May 2012

The WP6 attended the WHO/WP7 ST meeting in Lyon on 16-17-18 July 2012, in order to represent in the working group the EpiSouth epidemic intelligence expertise.

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Please refer also to the WP6 table: Overview of 2nd year activities – 4th semester.

• **EpiSouth Epidemiological Weekly Bulletin (eWEB)**

- The EpiSouth electronic weekly epidemiological bulletin (e-Web) is issued since 19th March 2008. Since March 2009 the e-Web is accessible on open access on EpiSouth Website.

- The e-Web provides a weekly summary of new health events occurring in both non-EpiSouth and EpiSouth countries (providing that information is already public or directly provided by the affected EpiSouth country). Events are presented in a public health perspective.

- The e-Web aims neither to present an exhaustive list of all “international health alerts” nor to provide weekly updates on previously reported health crises. E Webs are posted every Thursday on the EpiSouth website public area.

- Every week, the eWEB bulletin is archived in a database hosted on the secured EpiSouth website.

- Since March 2009, eWEB bulletins are available from: <http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/episouth-weekly-epi-bulletin-e-web?page=1>; and bulletins are also sent through email in a PDF format.

- As of 14th October 2012, 452 persons registered to the newsletter system to receive the eWEB through email.

- For the 4th EpiSouth PLUS semester (15th April 2012 to 14th October 2012): 26 eWEB bulletins (from n°213 to n°238) have been issued.

- **Note on West Nile virus (WNV) circulation in EpiSouth countries and neighbouring areas, seasons 2010 and 2011**

- On 27th January 2012, questionnaires regarding WNV circulation and WNV surveillance and laboratory capacities were sent to all EpiSouth focal points. WN Data (season 2010 and 2011) collected through questionnaires were also consolidated with data provided by the WP4 on Laboratory networks, official reports issued by OIE and MoH/MoA.

- On 1st July 2012, the WP6 team published a note on the West Nile virus circulation in EpiSouth countries and neighbouring areas. The note is available on the EpiSouth public network and on the public website (http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/note_west_nile_episouth_2010_2011_july2012.pdf)

- **The Epis-EpiSouth test platform**

- The Epis-EpiSouth platform was tested by the WP6 team before the WP6 Steering Team meeting in Istanbul held in June 2012. Comments and remarks were collected and transmitted to ECDC before the WP6 Steering Team so as to present the most finalised platform as possible to the WP6 Steering team.

- During the WP6 Steering team meeting in Istanbul (4-5 June 2012), half a day was dedicated to ECDC presentation of the last version of the EPIS-EpiSouth platform. Additional remarks and comments were collected during the meeting and communicated to ECDC for assessment and implementation.

- From 8 June to 22 June 2012, the revised version of the platform was open to the WP6 Steering team members for testing. Comments and propositions were collected by the WP6 team and sent to ECDC for additional modifications.

- **2nd WP6 steering team meeting in Istanbul in June 2012**

- The 2nd WP6 steering team meeting took place on 4th and 5th June 2012 in Istanbul, Turkey. It was organised in close collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Health and the Turkish EpiSouth PLUS focal points. (This meeting was the opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with the WP6 ST members, WHO, EC and ECDC as planned in the WP6 working plan and the AIDCO agreement).

- The main points discussed during the meeting were as followed:

- o Overview of the Epidemic Intelligence activities 2011-2012
- o Update and overview of EpiSouth PLUS project activities (WP1);
- o Presentation of the new secure alert platform: Epis- EpiSouth platform
- o Early warning system at WHO with the participation of WHO-EURO and the WHO country office in Turkey
- o Definitions of EpiSouth Standard Operating Procedures for EpiSouth alert posting (brainstorming in working groups)
- o The 2012-2013 work plan.

- The following participating countries were invited for the WP6 steering team meeting:

Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Romania, Tunisia, Turkey, France as well as MECIDS WP6 team, WP1 & WP2 leaders. Partners: WHO (EURO, EMRO, Geneva and country office), ECDC and EC. All countries and institutions were represented except Malta and Israel (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/wp6-steering-team-meeting-istanbul-turkey>)

(see annex IX)

- **Scientific seminars and congresses**

- During this 6 month's period (15th April 2012 to 14th October 2012), the WP6 team presented 2 posters at the 15th International Congress for Infectious Diseases (ICID) in Bangkok, Thailand (*Annexes XX & XXI*)

- o 'West Nile virus outbreak in the Mediterranean region, 2010-2011'

- o 'Early warning and epidemic intelligence in the Mediterranean region and Balkan countries: an EpiSouth network challenge'

- **Transfer and amendment of the 1st EpiSouth Project Meeting**

- Due to InVS's administrative and financial difficulties, it has been agreed by EC and WP1 that the EpiSouth 1st Project meeting will be organised in Italy by the WP1 (instead of Paris as initially planned). Accordingly, an amendment of the project's agreement and a transfer of the allocated funds are under process.

- **The WP6 mission in non-EU countries**

- Due to the freeze of activities (cf. 3rd bi-annual report) the priorities were set on maintaining major outputs. In this context, it has not been possible to carry out support mission in participating non –EU countries during the reporting period.

Problems encountered

- As mentioned in the 3rd bi-annual report, the freezing of the WP6 activities resulted in a delay of the activities and had an impact on the deliverables' calendar. In addition, due to financial difficulties relating to reimbursement of invoices, activities requiring further engagements of funds had to be put on standby in order to have time to obtain reimbursements. InVS was not in a capacity to financially support the organisation of the Annual meeting initially planned in Paris

- Therefore, priorities were put on the main activities and it has not been possible to perform some activities such as:

- o The organisation of missions in non-EU countries

- o The organisation of the EpiSouth annual meeting was transferred to the ISS as well as the related funds.

- Due to administrative and legal issues, it has also not been possible to formalise an Agreement with Mecids. Especially, the transfer of funds initially planned could not be implemented because of MECIDS legal status.

- The WP6 staff has been reduced for at least 6 weeks due to the sick leave of the coordinator

How were problems solved

- Besides these difficulties, the Institut de Veille Sanitaire and the WP6 team remained highly committed and main deliverables and milestones have been met.
- As agreed with EC, ISS and InVS, the EpiSouth annual General Assembly, will be organised in Rome, Italy.

- Concerning the Agreement with MECIDS, the possibilities of a Technical agreement (without transfer of funds) is being studied.

Activities planned for the next period

- Participation to the Steering Committee meeting (4th December 2012) and the Annual meeting (5th to 7th December 2012) in Rome
- Continuation of Epidemic Intelligence activities
- Finalisation of the EpiS-EpiSouth platform and facilitation of the launching of the new platform after endorsement by EpiSouth countries during the Annual meeting in Rome.

Objective 4: *Production of a strategic document, with guidelines based on assessments and surveys, aimed at facilitating IHR implementation (WP7)*

Involvement of partners and target groups

Coordination with other projects or activities

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Problems encountered

How were problems resolved

During the fourth semester, WP7 activities focussed on defining and developing consensus on how to analyse in depth the priority area of concern for IHR implementation in the EpiSouth region: coordination of surveillance and response between Points of Entry (PoE) and national systems. This area was identified during the consultation that took place in July 2011.

In order to develop consensus on the methodology to follow in order to elaborate the expected delivery of the Work Package, i.e. a strategic document on ways to strengthen the priority area of concern in the EpiSouth Region, the WP7 ST took part to a TC and to a workshop hosted by WHO, July 2012 (*see annex XXIII for the minutes*). Again the process was participatory and extended to ensure ownership and relevance of results.

In addition, during the reporting period, the approval process for the publication of two reports of WP7 was positively finalized in collaboration with WP1 and WP2. Approval was particularly complex for the outputs of this WP. In addition to consensus (among co-leaders and ST) on the technical content of the documents and EU rules and supervision, agreement had to be reached also with WHO in particular for aspects concerning copyright and logo expression.

The WP7 Steering Team at the WHO Meeting in Lyon, France

This consultation involved experts in surveillance and in points of entry (PoE), the EpiSouth project coordinator, WP7 ST and representatives of the other WPs as well as WHO staff. It marked the first meeting on communication between PoE and national surveillance systems.

The consultation provided an opportunity to identify surveillance activities at PoE as well as common gaps; mechanisms for collaboration and information sharing between staff working at PoE and those working on surveillance.

Participants agreed that guidance for improving communication between PoE and national surveillance systems is needed. It was also decided that this guidance document will be produced under the lead of WHO and developed with the contribution of experts and countries.

The guidance should focus on situation analysis, which should be the basis for the elaboration of a national plan of communication from and to PoE. It should also help develop a set of minimum acceptable standards for the implementation of core capacities at PoE. In particular it should focus on rules and requirements for communication among PoE at a country level; meeting and training requirements and which common tools (SOPs, MoUs, IT platforms) are needed to coordinate a harmonized, bidirectional communication within a PoE and between PoEs and the NHS.

The EpiSouth network's contribution to the development of this guidance will be double. Firstly it will contribute to its backdrop knowledge bases through an assessment of approaches adopted in different countries in the Mediterranean (e.g. by compiling case studies) and secondly it will validate the finalized guidance in a regional context. The latter will be performed by sharing of the guidelines with participating countries and performing a feasibility testing that will take into account the cost effectiveness (eg on line questionnaire, ad hoc missions, etc.) and might be embedded in the simulation exercise that will be carried out by the project in 2013 under the guidance of WP5 (*see annex XXIV*)

Problems encountered

Since the beginning of the project implementation, the 2011-2012 Mediterranean crisis has hindered the rapidity of communications among Countries and the participation of FPs to the WP activities. An additional aspect to consider is that the current severe European Economic Crisis could lead to more strict national prioritization of activities in public health institutions and ministries and penalize participation in the Project.

The priority area chosen by the network for in depth analysis and policy debate is particularly complex and problematic not only in the EpiSouth Region but globally. In order to tackle this topic in a technically sound way, more time is being dedicated to refining an appropriate methodology based on the input of EpiSouth Focal Points and subject matter experts. This has led to some delays in the implementation of activities.

The strategic presence of WHO in the WP7 co-leadership is a cornerstone of the entire project's approach to IHR strengthening. This however has led to a more complex approval process for the publication of the outputs of the Work Package requiring particular support from WP1 and WP2 in addition to greater work within WP7. Although this delayed the publication of the WP7 reports, the final product elaborated in collaboration with WHO, the

leading international Agency for all aspects concerning IHR 2005, has in our view a much greater value and visibility.

Corrections set up to overcome the problem

The close technical collaboration with WHO and the expertise of the countries of the EpiSouth network have been valorised. WHO PoE subject matter experts have been involved in the consultation process alongside the WP7 Steering Team and will contribute actively to the development of research tools and to the scope of the guidelines to be produced. This approach, by supporting country ownership, technical soundness and WHO endorsement, will ultimately enhance the added value of the outputs of WP7.

The approval process for the publication of WP7 outputs has been tackled thanks to a strong cross cutting collaboration among the project's WPs that enabled consensus to be reached among the various stakeholders (DG SANCO, DG DEVCO, WHO).

Activities planned for the next period

Based on the decisions taken during the fourth semester of the project's activities, WP7 is proceeding to support the development and validation of the WHO guidance for improving communication between PoE and national surveillance systems as described earlier in this report. The outline of the WHO guidance and the tools developed by EpiSouth for the assessment and validation will be discussed during the 1st EpiSouth project meeting in December 2012.

4. Annexes

See the Annexes' list and related documents which are integral part of this Report.

Silvia Declich
EpiSouth Plus Project leader

