

**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

1st BIENNIAL REPORT

15 October 2010- 14 April 2011



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This project is led by the Italian National Institute of Health

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:	15/10/2010 – 14/04/2011

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 AIDCO/DEVCO Service Contract : ISS – Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy)
WP1, WP2 and WP7 co-leader

Consortium AIDCO/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 **WP5 co-leader**
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. Ministry of Health - Ankara, TURKEY **WP 4co-leader**
20. MECIDS - ISRAEL, JORDAN and PALESTINE **WP6 co-leader**
21. WHO-LYO/HQ - Lyon, FRANCE **WP7 co-leader**

1. Executive summary

During this first semester the project activities focused on organising and establishing the ways of collaboration among the partners involved.

Agreements were consolidated between the partners of the consortium and the ISS and between all the WPs co-leaders.

In addition, Action Plans, describing how activities will be performed and how responsibilities will be shared between the WPs co-leaders, were prepared and presented at the 1st SC/Kick off Meeting in Luxembourg (February 3th, 2011).

Each WP has prepared background documents on which to build up the project's approaches and strategies (see the details in the WPs description parts).

We may note that some WPs (i.e WP5 and WP6) were facilitated in starting their activities because they were building on what was done in the previous phase of EpiSouth (i.e. WP5 and WP6 Steering Teams were already established, some working approaches and procedures were consolidated etc.).

Others (WP4 and WP7) had to establish ex-novo ways of working and the WPST composition.

For this reason we expect WP4 and WP7 to develop their activities in the next semester.

Overall, two aspects have delayed the implementation in this project period:

i) the administrative rules and regulations of the DEVCO Service Contract were new concepts for the partners and time was devoted to discussions and explanations. These aspects have been clarified and therefore we do not expect further delays.

ii) the Mediterranean Crises has affected several Countries of EpiSouth. Activities originally planned in Tunisia and Algeria are still waiting for final decisions.

Syria and Jordan, that were considered potential sites for Meetings, cannot be considered suitable at this time.

The EpiSouth Focal Points of the Countries affected are often very busy and overloaded.

These aspects might be still an issue during the next implementation period, although the situation is improving in some of the mentioned Countries.

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	WP
1	Establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories network	Process: Number of participants attending the Meeting organised by the Pasteur Institute for Laboratories Representatives out of the total number of those selected Output: Reference procedures available and endorsed by each country for the collaboration	WP4

		<p>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>	
2	<p>Promotion of common procedures in interoperable Generic Preparedness and Risk management among the countries involved in the Network</p>	<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 management.</p>	WP5
3	<p>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>	<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-</p>	WP6

		EU countries and between the Network and other EW platforms.	
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

2.3 Overview of activities for the period covered in the interim report

WP1. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP1	Activities/Tasks ¹	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement ²	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	AIDCO Inception Report	D	Report	M3	M4	100%	Many aspects related to project's implementation and administration not clear to the contractor and partners	Drafting of implementation scenarios and request of clarifications to DEVCO and SANCO	YES
	1st Steering Committee(SC) in Luxembourg	M	Meeting, Documents, Presentations, List of Participants Agenda	M3	M4	100%	Organisation by external organizer was not accepted by DEVCO	Expenses covered with Italian MoH available funds	YES
	Sustainability Plan (1st draft) in coordination with WP3	M	1st Draft available for coordination team comments	M4	M6	100%			YES
	Annual Project Work Plan	M	Plan	M4	M5	100%			YES
	1st SC Report	D	Report	M4	M5	100%			YES
	Sustainability Plan (Final) in coordination with WP3	M	Plan	M6			It was made available to		

¹ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

² 0-100%

							the partners in M7		
Participation to Coordination & WPST Meetings	A	Coordinati on Mission: WP6 (Israel); WP3 and WP5 (Lisbon, Escaide framework) WP2 and WP4 (Rome, ISS)	M1-M6	M2					YES
Participation to Conference and seminars	A	Delegation of Egyptian Ministry of Health; ESCAIDE; EC EWARS Meeting;		M2					YES

WP2. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP2	Activities/Tasks³	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement⁴	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Dissemination Plan	M	Draft document presented and distributed at the 1 st SC Meeting	M4	M4	100%	None	NA	Yes
	Evaluation survey on the web-site contents/tools and quarterly bulletin and needs for a multilingual version	O	Final document available	M4	M4	100%	None	NA	Yes
	Web site (both restricted NWA and public area) opening, updating and maintenance	M	Test web site available	M6-M12	M6	80%	Delay in finalizing the final web site structure and contents	Frequent contacts with CINECA and WP leaders to accelerate the process	Yes
	Quarterly Electronic Bulletin	D	Release of the first issue	M6, M9, M12	--	0%	The 1 st bulletin will be released with the official opening of the Web site (not yet opened)	Contacts to accelerate the process for the opening of the project's web site which contents should be presented in the quarterly bulletin	No
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning and stimulating the production of articles for possible	M	presentation made at the 8 th IEA 2010 ; presentation	M4-M12	M4-M6	100%	None	NA	Yes

³ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

⁴ 0-100%

	publication and technical report		<p>n made at XXIV Meeting SEEH Network; presentation made at IMED 2011 conference and 2 abstracts submitted and accepted at the 4th Eurasia Congress on Infectious Diseases;</p> <p>Poster EuroEpi 2010; publication plan for articles presented and approved at the 1st SC Meeting (LXB)</p>						
	Document summarising proposed rules for authorship, acknowledgements and logos	O	Draft document presented and distributed at the 1 st SC Meeting	M4	M4	100%	None	NA	Yes

Participation to WHO and EU meetings for competent bodies and contact points when requested	A	Number of attended meeting	M4-M12	M2	See under WP1			Yes
Outline and leaflet release and updating	M	Leaflet available	M4-M12	M4	50%	Outline not yet finalized	None	Yes
Link to the project's web site made available by partners and collaborating institutions	O	Number of external web sites providing links to the project's web site	M6	--	0%	Project's web site not yet opened	Contacts to accelerate the process for the opening of the project's web site	No
Press releases for the main project-related events	O	3 press releases announcing the start of the project and 2 press releases announcing the first SC and kick-off meeting	M1, M4	M1, M4	100%	None	NA	Yes

WP3. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP3	Activities/Tasks ⁵	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement⁶	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Evaluation plan	M	Plan	M4	M4	100%	None	NA	Yes
	Sustainability plan (in support to WP1)	M	Plan	M4-6	M6	100%	None	NA	Yes, draft available for partners comments

WP4. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP4	Activities/Tasks ⁷	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement⁸	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Configuration of Steering Team	A	ST Country List	M6		90%		Finalization	
	Presentation of mission to Focal Points	A		M3-6		50 %	Mission is being fine-tuned and questionnaires might be included in this phase	Set up of the organization for Wp4 took more time than planned	
	Identification of priority areas	A	questionnai re-analysis -Report	M4-6		50%	First an overview of already existing activities is	Idem, and finalization is in process	

⁵ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

⁶ 0-100%

⁷ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

⁸ 0-100%

							being done, which took more time than expected. Priority areas are adjusted accordingly		
	Participation to EQADeBe Project Meeting	A	Presentation		M6	100%			Yes

WP5. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP5	Activities/Tasks ⁹	Outputs/Deliverables/Milestones/Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement ¹⁰	Justification/Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Organization of attendance to the SHIPSAN TRAINET for Non-EU countries	A	Program Participants list	M3	Jan -11	100%	Some troubles with crisis in Arabic countries	training documentation will be sent to the those who cannot attend	
	Final Questionnaire& on-line version	A		M5	M6 draft to be uploaded				YES
	Directory of training courses	M		M3-12					
	Simulation exercise preparation	A		M3-28	Process started				

⁹ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

¹⁰ 0-100%

WP6. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP6	Activities/Tasks¹¹	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement¹²	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Epidemic Intelligence activities	A		M1-M12		100%			
	EpiSouth Weekly Epidemic Intelligence (eWEB)	D	bulletins	M1-M12		100%			YES
	Management / animation of the secure platform	M		M1-M12		100%			
	Mission to EpiSouth Countries		Israel and Palestine Mission Plan						YES
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning	A	2 Abstracts and 1 presentation available on line	M4-M12	M1, M4	100%			YES
	Collaboration with other WP activities	A	WP1, WP2, CINECA: quest., organisation of TC and meetings	M1-M12					YES
	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	PoA; Quest. disseminated and available on line	M3-M5	M6	100%			YES

¹¹ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

¹² 0-100%

WP7. Overview of 1st six-month activities

WP7	Activities/Tasks ¹³	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement¹⁴	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Analysis of existing data on IHR implementation in the EpiSouth Region	A		M4-6	M6	100%			
	First survey design	A		M6-7		Activities started to evaluate the availability of data from other sources and gaps to be filled in			
	Participation to REACT Project Meeting	A	Programme		M3				YES

¹³ In accordance with the Approved Work-plan and Timetable by WPs of the 1st year (3 February 2011)

¹⁴ 0-100%

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 1st six months period the coordination focussed principally on the following aspects:

i) *setting administrative and implementation procedures with the involved partners*

Specific Agreements between the ISS and the other members of the Consortium have been drafted in order to guide and facilitate the activities implementation considering responsibilities, resources and time frame.

The process was quite complex and time consuming, but has had the merit of creating the framework for clarifying many administrative and managerial aspects with all the involved partners.

The due Inception Report was firstly produced as a draft and the final version was finalized after the clarifications forwarded by DEVCO (*Annex 0*).

ii) *coordination meetings*

With the aim of preparing the WP's Action Plans and discussing implementation strategies, several meetings were carried out with the WP co-leaders, namely:

- 11-13 November : in the framework of Escaide Conference the WP1, WP3, WP5 and WP7 co-leaders met to discuss the relevant agreements and action plans;
- 16-27 November: participation to the MECIDS Executive Board Meeting in Jerusalem for presenting EpiSouth Plus and discussing agreement and action plan with the WP6 co-leaders: InVS and MECIDS ;
- 14 December: meeting at ISS (Rome) with WP2 and WP4 co-leaders plus CINECA (*Annex I*).

iii) *setting Project's Organisation and Governance*

The document "EpiSouth Plus Project Organization" has been drafted and finalized on the basis of the comments raised during the 1st SC Meeting in LXB: several Project's "Organs" have been identified and established in order to ensure the management, the governance and the full participation of all the Countries of the Network (*Annex II*).

The 1st Year Project Work Plan was set with all the WPs and presented during the 1st SC Meeting (*Annex III*)

iv) *EU Meetings*

Participation to the "Meeting of the EWRS component of the Community Network for the Epidemiological Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases", held in Luxembourg on the 1st and 2nd of December (*Annex IV*) 2010.

v) *1st SC/Kick off Meeting*

The 1st Project Steering Committee has been organized on the 3rd of February 2011 in Luxembourg with 35 participants (*Annex V*)

vi) ***Sustainability Plan (in coordination with WP3)***

The plan has been drafted and proposed to the WP co-leaders for discussion (*Annex VI*)

It has to be reported that the present crisis in the Mediterranean region has partially affected the project implementation:

- the usual availability of the EpiSouth Partners from North Africa was reduced during this period (for example the co-leader of WP1 (Mondher Behaoui from Tunisia, has not participated in the Project Kick off Meeting in LXB for the unstable situation in his Country). The co-leader of WP5 (Djohar Hannoun) was hardly reachable.
- the activities originally planned in those Countries (Tunisia, Algeria) are pending. The development of events will define whether modifications of locations will be necessary.

Although during this semester the activities have been run as per schedule, the situation is carefully monitored to be ready to contingency strategies and plans.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

WP2: Dissemination strategy

Dissemination plan available no yes (*Annex VII*)

Activities undertaken

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

The Project's dissemination strategy and plan, including the identification of target groups and dissemination contents and means, has been drafted and then presented and discussed at the first Steering Committee Meeting held in Luxembourg on February 3rd 2011. Based on the comments collected at that time and on other comments/suggestions received in the following months, the document has been finalised, uploaded in the members' area of the web site and is annexed to this report (*Annex VII*).

A draft version of the document summarising rules for visibility, authorship acknowledgements and logos has been presented and discussed among partners during the first steering committee meeting. Based on the comments received at that time and other comments received in the following weeks, the document has been finalised. This document is currently annexed to the dissemination strategy and plan and is available in the members' area of the web site. together with graphic tools such as layout for slides presentations and the official banner and logos (*at the end of Annex VIII*).

In the period January-February 2011, a survey among the EpiSouth focal points was conducted to evaluate the web-site contents and tools, the quarterly electronic bulletin and needs for a

multilingual web-site. Data from this survey was analysed and results summarised in a report which is available in the Members' area of the EpiSouth portal and is annexed to this report (*Annex VIII*). Based on the result of this survey, a test version of the new network's web site has been developed in collaboration with CINECA in April 2011. Due to an unexpected delay in collecting needed information from partners and to unexpected technical problems, the official opening of the new web-site foreseen for April 2011 has shifted to May 2011.

As a consequence, the first issue of the Quarterly Electronic Bulletin, which should launch the new contents presented in the project's web site, has been postponed to May 2011, after the official opening of the project's web site. Once the web site is officially opened, it will be continuously updated and the electronic bulletin released quarterly.

In the first six months of the project's implementation, EpiSouth-Plus was presented at several meetings. EpiSouth Plus was presented in the official meeting organised at ISS for the visit of the Egyptian Ministerial Delegation in October 2010 ([http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Presentation to Egyptian Delegation.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Presentation%20to%20Egyptian%20Delegation.pdf)). In November 2010 EpiSouth was presented at the Twenty fourth meeting of the South-eastern Europe Health Network, Tirana ([http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/EpisouthPlus overview IHR.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/EpisouthPlus%20overview%20IHR.pdf)) and EUROPEI 2010 - Epidemiology and Public Health in an evolving Europe, Florence, Italy ([http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Euroepi Poster Presentation.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Euroepi%20Poster%20Presentation.pdf)). In February 2011, one abstract has been orally presented at the 2011 IMED Conference held in Vienna ([http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Programme&slides IMED2011.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Programme&slides%20IMED2011.pdf)).

In March 2011, two abstracts providing a general description of the EpiSouth-Plus project and a specific description of the WP4 activities have been submitted and accepted for oral and poster presentation, respectively, at the 4th Eurasia Congress on Infectious Diseases which will be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia&Herzegovina in June 2011 (*Annex IX*). Other abstracts will be possibly submitted to other conferences/congresses in the next months. During the first steering committee meeting held in Luxembourg on February 2001, a publication plan has been presented, discussed and agreed which foresees the submission of three articles within the first year of activities.

Although the workplan for the first year foresees the participation to WHO and EU meetings for competent bodies and contact points when requested, such meetings have not yet been attended because no invitations have been received until now.

A leaflet describing the project's organization and activities was prepared and made available to partners for dissemination purposes in the members' area of the web site. It will be updated when necessary in the next months while a more extended description of the project will be soon prepared and made available in both the public area and the members' area of the new web-site.

Due to the delay in the opening of the new web-site, it has not yet been possible to activate links to the new project's web site in the official web sites of the partners and collaborating institutions.

Finally, three press releases were prepared and published in October 2010 to launch the start of the project ([http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/episouthplus ansamed-ing.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/episouthplus%20ansamed-ing.pdf), [http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Episouth plus October 2011 MOH-CCM.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/Episouth%20plus%20October%202011%20MOH-CCM.pdf); [http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/EC-press%20release february2011.pdf](http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp2/EC-press%20release%20february2011.pdf)), while other two press releases were prepared to announce the first Steering Committee and kick-off Meeting held in Luxembourg in February 2011 (http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=1&id=23938&lang_id=450).

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

WP3: Evaluation of the project

Evaluation plan available no yes (Annex X)

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

The project evaluation strategy and plan has been drafted and then presented and discussed at the first Steering Committee Meeting, held in Luxembourg on 3 February 2011. Based on comments collected at that time and on other comments/suggestions received in the following months, the final version has been finalised and annexed to this report, as well as uploaded in the members' area of the web site.

In this second phase of EpiSouth project, the WP3 of evaluation will try to highlight successful results and critical aspects in the implementation of the four specific objectives of the project, together with the assessment of correct timing and adequacy of planned deliverables.

It has been agreed that every four months, each WP leader will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire on the website, designed on the basis of his yearly work plan. Questionnaires will collect synthetic information at least on the following aspects:

- respect of scheduled milestones and deliverables according to the project WPs;
- active participation and networking of both associated and collaborating countries in the project activities;
- achievement of project indicators, both for quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Collection of information through questionnaire will start in June 2011.

In order to correctly describe actions and results obtained, it has been agreed to finalise questionnaires in collaboration with WP leaders. To discuss about suitable on line questionnaires, contacts with WP leaders have been already taken and possible site visits have been planned in this perspective.

The "Azienda Sanitaria Locale di Torino" (ASLTO1) is leader of WP3. Unfortunately, because of changes in the executive staff of ASLTO1, including the change of the legal representative of the ASLTO1, the agreement between the ISS and the ASLTO1 has not been signed yet. For this reason the non-key expert has not started yet his collaboration to the project, producing a little delay in the actions planned.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

*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

Coordination with other projects or activities

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Preparation activities

A survey of existing parallel activities was started (specifically in Europe and in Northern Africa).

A document for information of the different partners on the activities is in preparation and a questionnaire to survey the existing capacities on these target activities is being prepared.

These actions are being undertaken with both WP co-leaders.

In addition in the framework of participation to meetings of parallel initiatives, the final Meeting of the EU Project EQADeBa, was attended in Brussels on the 11th and 12th of April 2011 (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/Presentation%20EpiSouthCOOVI%20%5BSola%20lettura%5D.pdf>).

Problems encountered

Organisation of planned activities was more complicated and took more time than expected.

How were problems resolved

More personnel will be put on the planned activities and a more effective organisation will be put into place.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

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

Preparatory activities:

Procurement of the key expert has been delayed. She has been hired on the 17th of March 2011.

Participation to the First Steering Committee Meeting held in Luxemburg on February 3rd 2011. The main aspects of each WP's as well as the technical and financial characteristics of the current phase were widely discussed with the EC bodies.

WP5 Steering Team setting. During the first step of the project communication among the Steering Team have been retaken. New countries have been included: Malta and Greece. Communication with some of them, especially those in the Middle East and North Africa, has been difficult due to the Mediterranean crises started in the Spring 2011.

Scheduled activities:

SHIPSAN TRAINET course held in Athens, GREECE (18th -23rd January 2011).

Twelve participants from 8 Non-EU countries participated in the course focused on port health officers related to "Hygiene Inspections and Communicable Disease Prevention and Control on Passenger Ships".

Due to the crises started in Tunisia and then in other countries, some of the people foreseen to attend the course were not able to leave their countries (Tunisia and Libya).

During the organization period, SHIPSAN organisers suggested the participation of a third person from Turkey Mr. Cakir. His expenses have been covered part by SHIPSAN and part by EPISOUTH PLUS. His travel expenses have been covered by SHIPSAN while his accommodation and full board expenses have been cover by EPISOUTH PLUS.

In depth-core capacity needs assessment

Preparation of the questionnaire to identify strength and weaknesses in preparedness and response generic plans in the region at central national level has been the main activity performed during this period. The final version is ready to be uploaded in the web site.

Short interviews to be done by phone or skype will complete the information needed to cover the main objectives which are:

- 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

A second questionnaire focused on surveillance and early detection institutional training needs is almost prepared too. This will be applied at regional and local level in EpiSouth region.

From both questionnaires information and analysis priorities will be identified. Selected topics will be developed in the capacity building sessions to be run in Madrid and the training modules to be held in Algeria.

As many WP's had scheduled to send questionnaires to countries during the first semester of activities, a prioritisation has been done through the coordination of WP1 in order to not overload the country Focal Points. This situation will probably delay WP5 activities.

So far the scheduled activities related to WP5 in general and to the survey in particular are carried out as per Work plan, nevertheless feedbacks from Steering Team have been poorly received specially from the Arabic countries.

Simulation exercise preparation

In order to include necessary questions in the survey the first steps for Simulation Exercise (SE) preparation have been started. Some criteria for selecting the main risk to be spread during the exercise and operational aspects and procedures have been included in the questionnaire.

A SE Team has been set up. It involves different people and experts from countries, EC bodies, ECDC, and WHO as well as WP's of EPISOUTH PLUS project.

Other activities undertaken:

Establishing links with the EPIET and Field Epidemiology Training Programmes.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

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 co-leadership with MECIDS: Middle-East Consortium on Infectious Diseases and Surveillance

- For the EpiSouth PLUS project, it was agreed that each of the Project WP will be co-led by one EU and one non-EU Institution or Network.
- The WPs co-leaders will be responsible for the management and implementation of their respective WPs in accordance with the Project's schedule, milestones, deliverables and expected results. The WPs co-leaders will ensure the constitution of their respective WP Steering Teams (WPST) which will collaborate to the implementation of the planned activities.
- The WP6 "Early warning system and cross-border epidemic intelligence" will be led by the Institut de veille Sanitaire (InVS) and the consortium MECIDS (Middle-East Consortium on Infectious Diseases and Surveillance).
- MECIDS is a network composed by Jordan, Israel and Palestine and works in the field of infectious diseases. The idea of integrating a network implemented between 3 countries from Middle-East region as WP6 co-leader was seen as of great relevance. MECIDS expertise in dealing with a very delicate context as well as their experience of health related data exchange will be very valuable for the network.
- First contacts were made through the participation to MECIDS executive board on 27-28 November 2010. The WP6 and WP1 teams were able to present the project, its objectives and challenges: an occasion to propose a co-leadership with one of the EpiSouth PLUS Work-package.
- The administrative process has been launched in order to formalize the agreement between MECIS, Episouth PLUS and the InVS in charge of the WP6 coordination.
- Due to agenda constraints and administrative constrains from both sides (MECIDS and InVS) the visit of a MECIDS representative at InVS to evaluate the work burden has been scheduled for June 2011.

The WP6 mission in Israel and Palestine

- The attendance to the MECIDS executive board meeting in November 2010 provided a cost effective opportunity to perform one of the planned mission in Non EU Countries. Both Israel and Palestine had for some time expressed their willingness to host such a mission. Although, they belong to the same organisation (Ministries of health), MECIDS representatives and EpiSouth National Focal points are different persons and should continue to play different and complementary roles in EpiSouth

- Fruitful meetings were organised by the Focal Points in both Israel and Palestine to meet their partners, present their organisation structure and work frames. Heads of the surveillance and alerts units as well as other department and external partners were met.
- All associated institutions in the EpiSouth PLUS network have been visited: the Israel Ministry of Health in Jerusalem, the Israeli Center for Disease Control (ICDC) in Tel-Hashomer, the Palestinian Primary Health care and public health division in Ramallah.

The EpiSouth-EPIS review of specifications: the plan of action (PoA)

- As per the official project agreement, one of the EpiSouth-plus' objective is the development of synergies that will allow bilateral interoperability with European and other relevant Early warning and surveillance system in collaboration with ECDC and WHO.
- In order to ease this process with EU EWRS, a new EpiSouth platform will be developed under the EPIS environment by the ECDC. Before being operational, the use of this new platform will have to be endorsed by the participating countries.
- A review of the current EpiSouth –Alert platform as been shared with ECDC and functionality should be included.
- Two constructive face to face meetings between ECDC and WP6 teams have allowed to streamline the process and the PoA has been finalised (*Annex XI*).
- In order to integrate countries needs and expectations regarding the EpiSouth alert platform, an evaluation questionnaire was developed jointly between WP6 and ECDC. This questionnaire has been shared with all participating countries through the EpiSouth website through an active collaboration with WP2 and Cineca.
- Results from this survey will be available in the next semester and will be integrated in the functionality specification of the future EpiSouth-Epis-based platform.

Online eWEB bulletin registration form

- Through active collaboration of the WP2, CINECA and the WP6 steering team, a specific electronic tool allowing automatic subscription has been integrated to the EpiSouth website
- As the eWEB bulletin is public and freely accessible, the main objective of this eWEB subscription tool is to allow a larger and easier dissemination of the eWEB bulletin. From now on, any person interested in receiving the eWEB will get it automatically each week by email. This tool will also allow to monitor the number of subscription overtime
- This eWEB registration tool is available from the public area of the EpiSouth website: <http://www.episouth.org/newsletter.php>

DESCRIPTION OF INDICATORS OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

EpiSouth Epidemiological Weekly Bulletin (eWEB)

- The EpiSouth electronic weekly epidemiological bulletin (e-Web) has been issued since the 19th of March 2008. Every week, the eWEB bulletin is archived in a database hosted on the secured EpiSouth website. Since March 2009, the e-Web is publicly accessible on the EpiSouth Website (<http://www.episouth.org/cgi-bin/searchbull?TEMP= 2>) and is also sent through email in a PDF format.
- 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.
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- For the 1st EpiSouth PLUS semester (15th October 2010 to 15th April 2011): 26 eWEB bulletins (from n°135 to n°160) have been issued.

Scientific seminars and congresses.

During this 6-month period, the promotion of EpiSouth epidemic intelligence and cross border alerts were presented at:

- The IMED conference (International Meeting on Emerging Diseases and Surveillance) on 04-07 February 2011 in Vienna (Austria): presentation of the West Nile outbreaks in the Mediterranean region and EpiSouth countries. West Nile Data were collected from the 27 participating countries through a questionnaire: information on WN surveillance systems and availability of WN laboratory, epidemiological context and recent cases. The presentation is available at: http://ww2.isid.org/Downloads/IMED2011_Presentations/IMED2011_Ait-El-Belghiti.pdf
- Arbozoonet conference on 22-24 November 2011 in Rabat (Morocco): presentation of the EpiSouth project, phase 1 & EpiSouth PLUS. Presentation of the Epidemic intelligence work done on two zoonoses: West Nile & Crimean Congo Haemorrhagic fever (CCHF). The participation to this annual meeting was the occasion to establish relationships and initiate a collaboration process with a sister network also supported by the UE and developing activities in fields that are of pristine interest for EpiSouth epidemic intelligence activities: i.e. emerging zoonoses. The presentations are available at http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp6/CCHF-WNV-ARBOZOONET_NOV_2010.pdf
- NATO advanced research workshop in March 2011. NATO organised an advanced research workshop on Internet-based intelligence for public health emergencies and disease outbreak: technical, medical and regulatory issues in Haifa, Israel. EpiSouth WP6 was invited to present its expertise in this domain and to participate to round tables on epidemic intelligence and data sharing (Presentation available at <http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp6/>)
- CHORDS meeting. On November 29-30, 2010, Connecting Health Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance (CHORDS) organised a data sharing workshop in Jerusalem, Israel. CHORDS was established in 2009 by the Nuclear Threat Initiative's (NTI) and Global Health and Security Initiative (GHSI) to provide a non-governmental platform where regional infectious disease surveillance networks around the world interact not only with each other, but with other global partners to strengthen international health security. The Jerusalem workshop was the occasion to collaborate with sister networks operating similar activities in different parts of the world: SACIDS (Southern African Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance), MBDS (Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance), MECIDS (Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance), Fondation Merieux, Wildlife Trust and ProMED. This workshop provided the opportunity to share experience, difficulties, lessons learned but also to establish contacts with trusted colleagues.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

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

Between the 15th of October and the 14th of April, WP7 co-leaders finalized the WP action plan, consolidated the Steering Team (ST) membership, initiated the analysis of existing data on IHR implementation in the region and designed the first survey.

- **WP7 Action Plan and ST consolidation**

An action plan was finalized and presented during the Project Kick off Meeting in February 2011, along with the first year work plan. The document was finalized by the co-leaders of the Work Package between November and January, also through the use of teleconferences, and shared with the ST members.

The ST consolidation was a process that required 6 months due to the need to coordinate with other Work Packages and try to achieve a relatively good geographic representativity within the Team. To date the WP7 ST is composed of 8 Countries, one Network and 2 co-leaders. Communications with the ST members were initiated in April 2011.

- **Review of existing data on IHR implementation**

The review of existing literature, both through PubMed search and through the analysis of grey literature published by WHO and the European Observatory of Health Systems and Policies was performed. Based on a preliminary analysis of this a first survey was designed.

Analysis of the available documentation is in progress. The results will be discussed during the 1st meeting of the Steering Team and will permit to define precisely the content of WP7.

- **Participation in Conference and Seminars**

Participation to the Meeting organized by the EU Project REACT in Berlin (January 27, 2011)

The ongoing Mediterranean crisis hindered the rapidity of communications among Countries and made those communications impossible in Countries struck by conflict. In the field of activities of WP7 this translated in a slower consolidation of the ST and in the need to avoid overburdening Countries.

An effort was done to collect all the available information, to be able to tentatively identify priority areas to be analyzed in the coming months. The identified priorities will be validated first with the WP7 ST and subsequently by the Project Focal Points.

Activities planned for the next period

See Project Work Plan 1st year

The WPs Action Plans are available as *Annex XII*.

4. Annexes

See the Annexes document which is integral part of this Report.

Silvia Declich
EpiSouth Plus Project leader

Silvia Declich