

**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

2nd BIENNIAL REPORT

15 April – 14 October 2011



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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:	15/04-14/10/2011

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 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 **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

It has to be reported that this 2nd semester of activities has been impacted very much in its implementation by the long lasting debate on WP6 procedures with SANCO/EAHC, started during the negotiation phase and not yet solved at the moment.

In the period February-July 2011, the ISS and InVS have replied to several requests of clarifications of the SANCO/EAHC (including the one sent on the 29 July with the requested SOPs and the list of EpiSouth Focal Points for MS updated with EWRS contact points).

SANCO/EAHC requested that WP6 activities should have been considered frozen from July until the final closure of the issue on their side.

To date the project is waiting for the SANCO/EAHC reply and presently the WP6 activities are still “frozen”, even though the routine activities of epidemic intelligence (including e-week bulletins) have been maintained, as well as the collaboration with ECDC for risk assessment.

The Mission Report prepared by the Monitor who has carried out the DEVCO ROM (Results Oriented Monitoring, 17-21 October) has clearly outlined how the present situation is jeopardising the EpiSouth outcome:

“The EpiSouth network involves an impressive number of stakeholders supporting the project objectives with a great deal of interest. Co-ownership, shared responsibility and addressing commonly identified needs is the way to maintain the achieved trust relations. Any obstacles to this would disturb the balanced partnership and would be detrimental for the achievements reached..... The most critical aspect for the project effectiveness is related to the issue of data flow concerning the epidemic intelligence. Different position of the DG SANCO and the EpiSouth network partners concerning the issue is a serious threat to the project. Eventually insisting on a one way data flow without appropriate feedback could be critical for the overall project and the cooperation and trust achieved within the network so far.

Most prominent problem is related to freezing of WP6 due to different positions concerning some aspects of this component taken by the EpiSouth network and DG SANCO and DG DEVCO. This negatively influenced also the other WPs as related to WP6. Unresolved situation lasts for over four months and seriously undermines the overall project efficiency”.

Main achievements

In the previous bi-annual report we noted 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.

And in fact, WP4 and WP7 developed greatly their activities during this 2nd semester even if, especially referring to the WP4, a delay of around 3 months towards the original plan should be recognised.

The Mediterranean Crises that has partly affected the 1st semester of activities, it's still a point to be considered mainly for two aspects:

- some National Governments (i.e. Tunisia, Libya, Egypt) 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 probably need to be moved to other less unstable countries.

Cross-cutting achievements

Project's visibility through the new web-site, the participation to Conferences, the participation to the “ *Stakeholder Consultation on Health Security in the European Union*”, etc.

Synergies with Networks/Projects: ShipSan; ENIVD; 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: ECDC Rapid Risk Assessment – A(H5N1) Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Egypt – Implications for human health in Europe”

“WHO Global Alert and Response (GAR) – West Nile Virus Infection (WNV) in Europe”

Work Packages achievements

WP4: Identification of priorities and set up of the Experts Committee

WP5: Training Needs Assessment and set up of the Framework for the Simulation Exercise Development

WP6: Cross Border EI Activities; e-week bulletins; WP6 Steering Team Meeting in Montenegro (see the § on Constraints)

WP7: Report on IHR core capacities in the EpiSouth Countries; Identification of priority area for EpiSouth intervention; WP7 Steering Team Meeting in Italy

Constraints

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

However, it should be noted that, 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. In particular the WP1 co-leader, Dr Mondher Bejaoui, from Tunisian MoH, and Dr Djohar Hannoun, WP5 co-leader from Algeria PH Institute have participated in all the relevant project's working events.

- **Argumentation with DGSANCO and DEVCO on some aspects of WP6** bringing to the freezing of WP6 activities still in place (started in February 18, 2011 and still not solved).

Although soon after the WP6ST consultation Meeting held in July in Montenegro, the Coordination/ISS and the WP6 leadership/InVS replied to the SANCO/EAHC requests, additional requests for revisions of the SOP were asked with the SANCO/EAHC letter dated October 11.

Inputs Utilisation

The entity of inputs utilisation does not reflect the entity of the activities implemented:

- Key and no-key Staff engagements: although some staff was hired with delay, (so the project's funds were also used with delay), many activities were carried out by permanent staff of the Institutions involved. In addition, the WP5 coordinator/ISCIII key expert had her

EpiSouth contract finalized in mid March 2011 (due to long internal procedures at ISCIII), but she was working on the EpiSouth activities since the project's starting with another contract paid with ISCIII's resources.

- the "funds consuming" activities (WP4 and WP5 meetings and trainings; the 1st Project Meeting; stages at EU PH Institutes etc.) will be implemented starting from the 2nd year. The Project Budget Breakdown (Annex V of the contract) is not divided by year, but, in accordance with the project's schedule, inputs utilization is expected to increase in the 2nd and 3rd year.

- the WP6 freezing has delayed the planned missions to the involved countries and therefore funds utilization has been reduced.

However it should be recognized, as reported in the ROM report, that the project's implementation is delaying and a no-cost time extension could greatly consolidate the achievements and thus enhance the final impact of the Project.

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.

Actually, some meetings and trainings have been planned to be held in the North Africa countries. The project is trying to wait for a more stable and secure situation in those countries. If this will not be ensured soon, the 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	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	WP4

		<p>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>	
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 management.</p>	WP5
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</p>	WP6

		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.	
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 2nd interim report

WP1. Overview of 2nd 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
	Sustainability Plan (Final) in coordination with WP3	M	Plan	M6	M7	100%	available to the partners in M7		Yes
	Participation to Coordination & WPST Meetings & TC	A	Coordination Mission: Sarajevo, June 2011; London June 2011; WP6/Podgoritza, July 2011; WP7/Rome, July 2011; WP2/Rome Sept 2011; WP4TC, Sept 2011	M7-M12	M7	100%			Yes
	Participation to Conference and seminars	A	Tirana, April 2011; Palermo, May 2011; Sarajevo, June 2011; EuroMed/ UfM-Bxl, June 2011	M7-M12	M7	100%			Yes

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

² 0-100%

WP2. Overview of 2nd six-month activities

WP2	Activities/Tasks ³	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement ⁴	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Web site (both restricted NWA and public area) opening, updating and maintenance	M	Web site available	M6-M12	M7-M12	100%	Initially planned at M6, the web site was opened one month later because of the delay in finalizing its structure and contents	Frequent contacts with CINECA and WP leaders to accelerate the process	
	Quarterly Electronic Bulletin	D	Release of the first two issues	M6, M9, M12	M8, M11	67%	The first issue of the bulletin has been released two months later because of the delay in the official opening of the web site. As a consequence, the second issue has also been postponed by two months and the third issue, initially planned in October 2011, will be released in December 2011	Contacts to accelerate the process for the opening of the project's web site which contents should be presented in the quarterly bulletin	Yes
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning and stimulating the production of articles for possible publication and technical report	M	6 Poster or oral presentations made at 5 conferences/workshops/meetings One article submitted for	M7-M12	M7-M8, M12	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 in the European Journal of Public Health						
Participation to WHO and EU meetings for competent bodies and contact points when requested (in collaboration with WP1)	A		Presentations made at 1 meeting	M7-M12	M8	100%	None	NA	Yes
Outline and leaflet release and updating	M		Leaflet and Outline available in the web site	M7-M12	M7-M12	100%	None	None	Yes
Link to the project's web site made available by partners and collaborating institutions	O		6 partners' institutions web sites providing links to the project's web site plus ECDC and EAHC	M6	M8, M12	NA	Initially planned in M6, it has been postponed by two months because of the delay in the official opening of the web site and no actions taken by some partners	Contacts to accelerate the process for the opening of the project's web site and solicitation of partners to provide the link	No
Press releases for the main project-related events	O		2 press releases announcing the opening of the project's web site and the WP7 Steering Team Meeting	No planned in the 2 nd semester	M8, M10	100%	None	NA	Yes

WP3. Overview of 2nd 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	WPs activities evaluation questionnaires	M	Quest	M8 M12		0%	<p>Because of some 6 month project delay, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ delayed engagement of some key experts ▪ internal troubles in Mediterranean countries ▪ freezing of WP6 monitoring trough questionnaire has been postponed 	First questionnaires will be delivered with a eight-month delay at M16	

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

⁶ 0-100%

WP4. Overview of 2nd 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
WP4	Configuration of Steering Team	A	ST country list	M6	M10	100%	Political events in the Region	Finalisation	Yes, List of the WP4ST members
	Presenting the mission and activities of WP4 to FPs	A	E-mail of information WP4 Action Plan	M5	M10	100%	Fine-tuning of the mission	Recruitment of the non-key expert	Yes, Informative letter to the ST WP4 Action Plan
	Identification of priority areas	A	Questionnaire, analysis, Report Preliminary list of pathogens Questionnaire to assess priority issues Finalising priority Sharing & discussing the priority (TC)	M7	M12	100%	Difficulties on feedback and prioritization with other WPs	Finalisation Personal contacts by phone Fine-tuning with other WPs	Yes, Questionnaire Results Agenda of the TC Minutes of the TC
	Participation to the EQADeBe Project meeting	A	Presentation		M6	100%			
	Meeting of expert committee	M	Identification of experts Meeting in Paris (planned for early 2012)	M9	Expected M15	50%	Difficulties to find non-EU experts Agenda of the experts	Extended contacts Find a consortium for a minimum of	Yes, List of the experts

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

⁸ 0-100%

								experts	
	Identification of laboratories interested in contributing to the EpiSouth initiative	A	<p>Questionnaire to assess candidate laboratories capacities (minimum requirements)</p> <p>Sharing with & validation by experts of the Questionnaire</p> <p>Sending Questionnaire to FPs</p> <p>Analysis of the responses</p> <p>Identify strengths & weaknesses of the labs</p>	M11	Expected M15	45%			Yes, Draft of the Questionnaire
	Mapping of existing biological expertise	M	<p>Inventory of Networks involving laboratories of the area</p> <p>Inventory of Laboratories of Reference and/or involved in networks (according to the defined priority areas)</p> <p>Map</p>	M12	Expected M14	80%	<p>High overlap of networks in the region</p> <p>Difficulties to find information for non-EU countries</p>	<p>Personal contacts</p> <p>More information with the return of questionnaires</p>	Yes, Draft of the inventories
	Meeting with the heads of Laboratories interested in the approach and corresponding to the minimum requirements	A	<p>List of the Laboratories selected & who agreed</p> <p>List of the Heads of these Laboratories</p> <p>Identify a contact/lab</p> <p>Prepare objectives of the Meeting</p> <p>Meeting in Turkey</p> <p>Finalisation of the expertise mapping</p> <p>List the needs & discuss solutions</p>	M13	Expected M16-17	5%			

WP5. Overview of 2nd six-month activities

WP5	Activities/Tasks⁹	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement¹⁰	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Collaboration Agreement with Algeria		Signed Agreement				Several changes of Directors at INSP-Alger did not allowed agreement signature and money transfer	e-mails, phone calls, proposal for alternative solutions	
	Participation to the ShipSan final Conference	A	Program Participants' list		M12				YES
	Final Questionnaire & on-line version	A	Q available on line	M5	M8	100%	Process of revision with ST with low participation of some members		YES
	Directory of training courses	M		M3-12	Process started	5%			
	Simulation exercise preparation	A	Drafts	M3-28	Process started	15%			

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/Tasks ¹¹	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement ¹²	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	Epidemic Intelligence activities	A		M6-M12		100%			
	EpiSouth Weekly Epidemic Intelligence (eWEB)	D	bulletins	M6-M12		100%			Yes
	Management / animation of the secure platform	M	Alerts posted	M6-M12		100%			Yes
	WP6 steering team meeting	A	Montenegro meeting	M7-M8	M9	100%			Yes
	Mission to non-EU EpiSouth Countries	A	Planned in the Balkans but cancelled	M7-M8		0% §	WP6 – FREEZING From 5th July		Yes EC Correspondence available
	1 week Epidemic Intelligence stage at InVS (Paris)	M	stage	M10		0% §	WP6 – FREEZING From 5th July		EC Correspondence available
	Presentations at conferences/workshops and planning	A	1 oral presentation EurAsia congress on infectious diseases (Sarajevo, June 2011)	M4-M12	M8	(100%) §			Yes
	Collaboration with other WP activities	A	WP1, WP2, CINECA: questionnaire on line., organisation of meetings	M6-M12		100% §			Yes (eg. questionnaire to evaluate the platform, organization of the Montenegro meeting)

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

¹² 0-100%

§ Starting from July 2011 (freezing of WP6 activities), only routinely activities and specific collaborations with ECDC-EC were carried out

	Collaboration with EU/ECDC for the EpiSouth/EpiS secured platform interop: Plan of Action (PoA), face-to-face meeting; EW platform evaluation.	A	PoA; requirement catalogue; Quest.	M6-M12	M6 - M9	100%			Yes (eg.TC with ECDC, requirement catalogue for EPIS)
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WP7. Overview of 2nd six-month activities

WP7	Activities/Tasks ¹³	Outputs/ Deliverables/ Milestones/ Activities	Indicators	Achievement date as per approved Work-plan	Date of achievement	Level of achievement ¹⁴	Justification/ Problems encountered	Action to be taken to overcome the problem	Related Annexes Available
WP	First survey design	A	Questionnaire prepared	M6-7	M6	100%			Yes
	Online questionnaire on countries' needs and constraints in enhancing their surveillance systems and in the elaboration of the general preparedness plans.	M		M 8-10		0%	The survey was drafted. However after an analysis of the requirements with coleaders it became evident that all the data needed was available from an existing survey performed by WHO in 2010. The survey was therefore a duplication of	It was agreed to forego the administration of the survey. Data was retrieved by WHO co-leader for the countries of the EpiSouth Region, analysis performed.	

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

¹⁴ 0-100%

							effort and an un-needed burden for focal points		
	Validation and discussion of preliminary results at the first ST and Sub-regional Meeting	A	Report prepared	M9	M9	100%			Yes
	Analysis of data and elaboration of preliminary results	A	Report prepared	M9-12	M9	100%			Yes
	In depth analysis of selected core capacity/ies: II survey design	A	Questionnaire	M 11-12		50%			

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 2nd six months period the coordination focussed principally on the following aspects:

i) coordination meetings

1-5 June: in the framework of “ *The 4th Eurasia Congress of Infectious Diseases (EACID 2011), Sarajevo, B&H, 1-5 June 2011*” the coordinator had met with the co-leaders of WP4 and WP6 to discuss aspects of the activities implementation.

In addition, a meeting was organized with the representatives of Bosnia & Herzegovina Institutions which are part of EpiSouth Network at the Ministry of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo.

7-9 June: in the framework of the Global Health Security Initiative- Early Alerting and Reporting Project (GHSAG) Meeting held in London, the EpiSouth coordinator and WP7 co-leader had discussed about the Early Warning Platforms and information exchanging with the other members of GHSAG (including the InVS team/WP6 co-leadership).

5-6 July: in the framework of the WP6 Steering Team Meeting held in Montenegro, several aspects were discussed with the other co-leaders present and EpiSouth FPs. In particular a specific meeting was held at the Institute of Public Health in Podgorica with the Director of the Institute and the staff involved in the EpiSouth activities.

20-21 July: in the framework of the WP7 Steering Team Meeting held at ISS, the progress of the project’s activities were discussed in particular with the WP4, WP5 and WP7 co-leaders.

14-15 September: in the framework of the WP2 co-leader teams Meeting held at ISS, the progress of the project’s activities were discussed with focus on the multilingual website development.

ii) coordination teleconferences

Several teleconferences were organized with the WP co-leaders and other relevant participants to discuss technical and financial matters and to monitor the WPs activities progresses.

In particular:

- 14 June: teleconference with WP4 co-leaders and IP staff;
- 27 June: teleconference with WP5 co-leader and ISCIII staff;
- 12 July: teleconference with WP4 co-leaders and IP staff;
- 20 September: teleconference with WP4 co-leaders and IP staff.

iii) setting 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 particular efforts have been done in order to:

- set up the **Project Advisory Board (AB)**. The AB is presently composed by 17 international experts (from EU and non EU Institutions) and representatives of the Institutions acting as collaborating partners of the EpiSouth Project (i.e. HSC, SANCO, EAHC, DEVCO, ECDC, WHO) but not involved in its management and implementation, with the role of advising the Project Coordination and the Steering Committee especially on technical critical issues ([EpiSouth Network Advisory Board | EpisouthNetwork.org](#)).

Draft of guidelines and strategic documents produced by the Project will be forwarded to the AB Members for their comments and recommendations before finalisation and dissemination.

The consultation for request of specific advise will be done by the coordination team through e-mail or teleconferences. In addition, a dedicated area for the AB members has been open in the Network Working Area (NWA) of EpiSouth web site to allow documents uploading/downloading (documents area) and information exchanging and discussion (forum).

The AB Members will be invited to the Project Meetings and might be invited in other occasions (Steering Committee, Steering Team Meetings, etc.) according to the needs.

The screenshot shows the EpiSouth website interface. At the top, there is a logo for EpiSouth and a tagline: "Network for the Control of Public Health Threats in the Mediterranean Region and South East Europe". Below the logo is a navigation menu with items like Home, Meetings & Events, Document Area, Discussion Forum, Enter data, Cross Border Alerts, Search, Contacts, Guide, Platform Settings, Web stats, and EPISOUTH Home.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- User Data:** Name: Maria Grazia Dente, Organization: Italy - Istituto Superiore di Sanita' (ISS). There is a "Logout" button.
- Workspaces:** All site, General Assembly (FPs), WP Network Working Area, WP Steering Teams Working Area, Project Steering Committee Working Area, and Advisory Board (highlighted with a red arrow).
- Advisory Board - Document Area:** A table with columns: Document area name, Users, Documents, Visited, and Downloaded. The table shows one entry: "Advisory Board - Document Area" with 16 users, 0 documents, 0 visited, and 0 downloaded. There are links for "Add new area" and "Back to all site docs list".
- Forum list:** A table with columns: Forum name, Moderator, Users, Topics, and Visited. The table shows one entry: "Advisory Board - Discussion Forum" with Maria Grazia Dente as the moderator, 16 users, 0 topics, and 0 visited. There are links for "Add new Forum" and "Back to all site forum list".

- consolidation of **WP Steering Team (WPST)**. The WPST have been created to enhance both the participation of the Countries to the activities (as countries participate on the basis of their

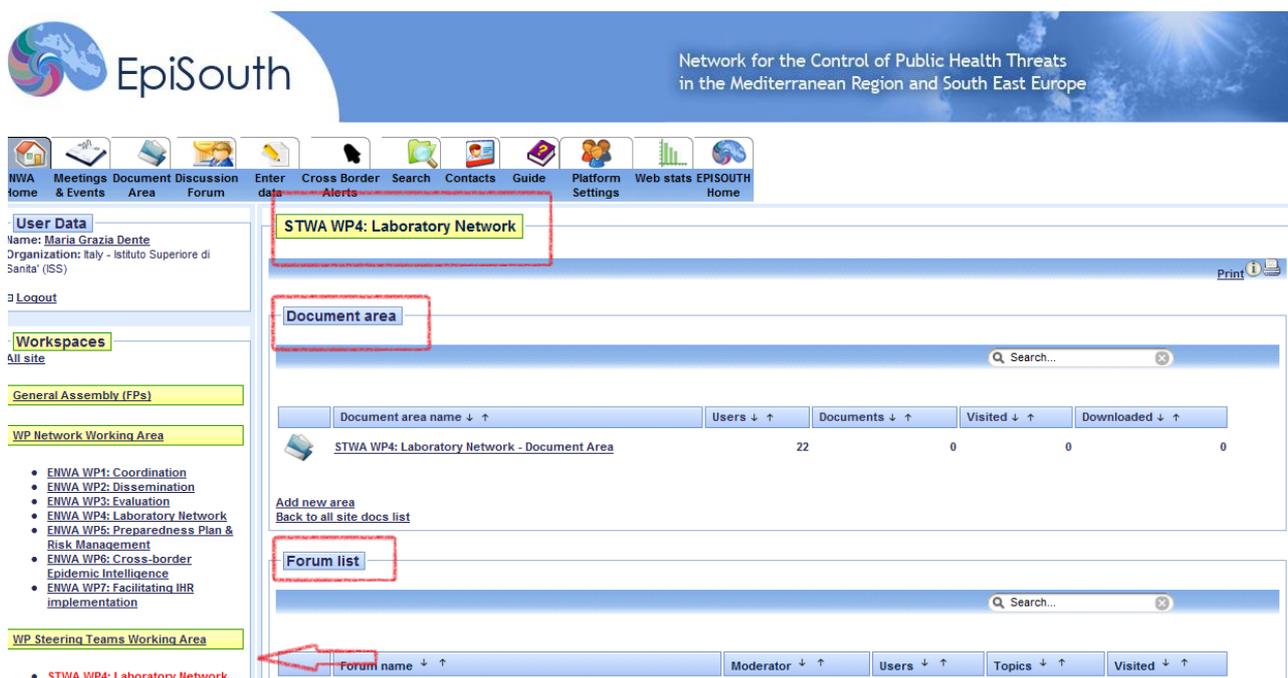
interests and needs) and the efficacy (as the reduced amount of participant countries (9-10) speeds up the decision process and facilitates the preparation of tools and documents).

Presently 24 Countries, out of the 27 involved in the Network, are taking part in at least one of the WPST .

For different reasons, Libya, FYROM and Bosnia and Herzegovina are not involved at the moment in any WPST. Contacts are going on to facilitate the process.

However, it is needed to point out that all the EpiSouth Countries can participate in the activities planned by the Project (meetings, trainings, stages etc.), being them part of WPST or not. The WPST are a good means to enhance sense of ownership, efficacy and future sustainability.

ST members meet during ST Meetings and share documents and information trough the dedicated NWA.



- up dating and consolidation of country focal points in accordance with the set criteria

Considering the past experience and the new challenges posed by EpiSouth Plus, all the Partner Countries were requested to consider the following criteria for the selection and appointment of their FPs:

- ✓FP should be staff belonging to the National Public Health Institute and/or Ministry of Health and/or National Reference Laboratory
- ✓ Decision making position
- ✓ Access to national early warning and surveillance systems data (EWRS Focal Points, for EU countries)/IHR Focal points (for EU and non-EU countries)
- ✓ In contact with the National Reference Laboratory if not part of it

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

Starting from February 2011, the EC DG SANCO started to ask to the Project Coordination to guarantee that the project activities in general, and those of WP6 in particular, were implemented within the EC legal framework.

The Coordination and WP6 leadership efforts went towards the objective of showing and proving to the EC that all the activities were being implemented in accordance with the EC legal aquis as stated in the Project's document.

Unfortunately the EC deemed insufficient the documentation provided by the EpiSouth Coordination and WP6 until November 2011, and the WP6 activities are been kept frozen since July 2011. However, as already reported, the WP6 routine activities of epidemic intelligence (including e-week bulletins) have been maintained, including collaboration with ECDC for risk assessment and production of weekly bulletins.

This issue has indeed created many collateral repercussions on the other WPs activities and on the entire project's plan and related schedule.

Among others, the 1st Project Meeting was planned to be held in Paris in February 2012. This would have been the 1st occasion where all the EpiSouth Focal Points could have met vis a vis for discussing the several issues on which it has been worked on during this first year of activity. Most probably this event will be subject to 6 months delay. Many activities are connected to this 1st Meeting: the WPs Steering Team Meetings; the Head of Med Lab Meeting; the discussion of research, governance and sustainability issues with the FPs; the presentation of the project's achievements to the AB and collaborating Institutions, the discussion of the ECDC/Epis platform etc..

The coordination in collaboration with all the WPs leadership is revising the project's plan taking in consideration the above described aspects. In the next future the possibility for a no-cost extension will be assessed with the partners and EC DGSANCO and DEVCO.

v) EU Meetings

30 June: the project leader and the WP1 co-leader from Tunisia have participated to the "UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN- HEALTH FORUM" - Health Senior Official meeting in Bruxelles

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

Azienda Ospedaliera, Padua is involved as collaborating partner 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, and in the implementation of WP4 as Member of the Steering Team.

The concerned period represented a phase consisting in performing administrative procedures for the requested administrative documents and acquiring human resources.

Relating to the project scientific contents, Azienda Ospedaliera, Padua supports the coordinator in WP1 activities as planned in the page 6 of Annex III "Organisation and Methodology"). Furthermore, considering the consolidated expertise of Padua University Hospital as a Biosafety Level BSL 3 – P3 LAB and the strong interest in cooperating and offering concrete participation in the WP4 Mediterranean Regional Laboratories Network to contribute to the specific objective 1 Establishment of a Mediterranean Reference Laboratories Network, Mrs Monia Pacenti - senior scientist of the Microbiology and Virology Department of Padua University Hospital - was

identified to substitute Mr Giovanni Putoto, the senior PH expert representing the Azienda Ospedaliera, Padua in the previous phase of EpiSouth.

Mrs Monia Pacenti is Member of the WP4 Steering Team; she collaborated in the compilation of the WP4 questionnaire on Training and Networking to finalize the priority areas as well as to assess the needs of the priority areas set of the Country Focal Points for the establishment of a Laboratory Network.

The questionnaire was a preliminary step to a telephone conference organized by the WP4 leaders. Mrs. Monia Pacenti, together with Prof. Giorgio Palù, Director of Microbiology and Virology Department of Padua Teaching Hospital, attended the mentioned telephone conference that took place on 20th September 2011 and included the WP4 Steering Team Members. Mrs. Montagna and Borella were informally present at the conference.

Mrs. Borella has actively supported Mrs. Pacenti in introducing her to the project in terms of links with the coordinator, project website navigation and documents.

Activities planned for the next period

It has to be reported that the crisis in the Mediterranean region has had an immediate impact on EpiSouth Project's activities during the period April-August 2011. Since September the relevant countries are under a political, economic, social etc. "re-organisation" phase which is not preventing the participation of EpiSouth Country representatives to the project's activities.

We assume that starting from the new year 2012, activities can be also organised and implemented in these Countries (Tunisia, Algeria) as planned, otherwise modifications of locations will be necessary.

Also, in accordance with what has been above reported especially for the WP6, it is urgent to proceed with a careful re-planning of the 2nd year project's activities discussed and shared among the partners.

On the basis of the re-planning outcomes, most probably a no-cost extension period will be negotiated with the EC DGDEVCO and DGSANCO.

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

Sustainability Plan (1st discussion with partners)

2nd year Project Work Plan

SANCO interim Report

DEVCO 3rd bi-annual Report

Support to the 1st Project Meeting Organisation

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 official opening of both the public area and the members' area of the new web-site foreseen for April 2011 has shifted to May 2011 and since then it has been continuously updated. The contract for the translation of the main contents of the web site in French and Arabic has been just finalised and the multilingual version of the web-site will be soon implemented and made available in the next months.

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 June 2011, after the official opening of the project's web site. After this, the second issue has been regularly released in September 2011 and the next one is expected in December 2011 (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/episouth-electronic-bulletin>).

During this semester a particular effort has been devoted to develop ways aimed at facilitating the participation of the Focal Points to the project's activities also through the NWA of the Project web site.

For example each participant is constantly kept informed, through a customised interface, about recent documents and alerts uploaded, activities to be accomplished, incoming events.

The screenshot shows the EpiSouth Network Working Area web application. The browser window title is "EpiSouth - Network Working Area - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "https://nwa.episouthnetwork.org/index.php". The page features a navigation menu with items like "MWA Home", "Meetings & Events", "Document Area", "Discussion Forum", "Enter data", "Cross Border Alerts", "Search", "Contacts", "Guide", "Platform Settings", "Web stats", and "EPISOUTH Home". A "User Data" section displays the name "Maria Grazia Dente" and organization "Italy - Istituto Superiore di Sanita' (ISS)". A "Welcome Maria Grazia Dente" message indicates the latest access on 02-NOV-2011 at 04:11. The "Cross Border Alerts" section lists recent alerts: "MALARIA in GREECE (first notification: 21-MAY-2011)", "WEST NILE FEVER in TUNISIA (first notification: 15-OCT-2011)", "LEGIONELLOSIS in GREECE (first notification: 11-OCT-2011)", and "HEMOLYTIC UREMIC SYNDROME in FRANCE, METROPOLITAN (first notification: 04-OCT-2011)". Other sections include "Enter Data", "Meetings & Events", and "Documents Consultation".

In the second semester of the project's implementation, the EpiSouth-Plus activities were presented 6 times at 5 different conferences/workshops/meetings held in different contexts and identified as those most relevant for dissemination purposes:

- [Poster presented to the 14th European Health Forum - Workshop on Health Security, Gastein, Austria 5 October 2011](#)
- [Presentation to the Union for the Mediterranean-Health Forum, Brussels, Belgium, 30 June 2011](#)
- [Presentation to the 4th Eurasia Congress of Infectious Diseases, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, 1-5 June 2011](#)
- [Poster presented to the 4th Eurasia Congress of Infectious Diseases, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina 1-5 June 2011](#)
- [Presentation to the Forum Mediterraneo in Sanità 2011, Palermo, Italy 24-26 May 2011](#)
- [Presentation to the Subregional Meeting on Shared Solutions to Common Threats - Vaccination and Vulnerable Populations in South East Europe, Tirana, Albania 28-29 April 2011](#)

In May 2011, a scientific article based on data collected within the EpiSouth Network has been submitted for publication in the European Journal of Public Health and is currently under revision.

In the second semester of activities, the EpiSouth Network was requested to participate to the meeting for competent bodies and contact points "Union for the Mediterranean-Health Forum", which was held in Brussels, Belgium on 30 June 2011 (see above for the presentation made on this occasions).

A leaflet describing the project's organization and activities was previously prepared and made available to partners for dissemination purposes in both the members' area and the public area of the web site (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/EpiSouth-Plus%20leaflet.pdf>). In the second semester of activities, the leaflet has been continuously updated and an outline with more extended description of the project has been also prepared and made available in both the public area and the members' area of the web-site (<http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/EpiSouth-Plus%20outline.pdf>).

Due to the delay in the opening of the project's web-site, the request to partners to activate links to it in the official web sites of their institutions was delayed two months. Currently, six partner Institutes have activated such link and a written solicitation has been sent to speed-up the process. However, it should be considered that some partner Institutes do not have an official web-site and some of them have a web-site with a structure that doesn't allow the logical placing of links to external web sites, nor a multilingual version. As a consequence, we expect that the link to the EpiSouth web site will be made available by no more than fifteen partner Institutes.

The link to the EpiSouth Network website is also available in other web sites which increase the project's dissemination (such as EpiCentro, EuroSurveillance, EAHC).

Finally, although no press releases were planned in the second semester of activities, a press releases was prepared in June 2011 to announce the opening of the new web-site http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/ENPI-EC-press%20release_june%202011-new%20web%20site_0.pdf and another one was prepared in August 2011 to announce the WP7 Steering Committee Meeting http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/ENPI%20press%20release%20august%202011_1.pdf#overlay-context=content/press-releases.

Activities planned for the next period

- The multilingual website will be officially launched.
- Both the restricted members' area and the public area of the web-site will be continuously updated in the second year of activities.
- The second issue of the quarterly electronic bulletin will be released in December 2011 and the following three issues in March, June and September 2012, respectively.
- During the second year of activities, 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.

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

Together with the assessment of correct timing and adequacy of planned deliverables and in coherence with the Plan of Evaluation, defined in February 2011, the WP3-evaluation is trying to highlight both successful results and criticisms in the achievements of the four specific objectives of the project. The project's activities actually started in January 2011.

Unfortunately the project increased delay, because of delayed engagement of some key experts and internal troubles in some Mediterranean countries. In addition, another element which contributed to increase delay has been due to freezing of WP6, due to different positions concerning some aspects of this component, taken by the EpiSouth network and DG SANCO and DG DEVCO. This situation rebounded also on the other WPs, as related to WP6, affecting the overall project efficiency. For these reasons has been decided to postpone the production of monitoring questionnaires, as planned in the Project Work Plan, waiting for the resolutions of those issues described above.

Nevertheless, the WP3 has monitored the situation and progress of activities, both through informal contacts with WPs co-leaders and through formal meetings: on July 20th during the WP7 Steering Team meeting and on September 20th during a teleconference organised by WP4.

WP3 is also trying to identify those elements of strength and weakness which may ensure or challenge the sustainability of the EpiSouth network. For this purpose WP3 actively participated in drafting the sustainability plan, produced in April this year. The objective is to identify a tentative

list of Vital Functions (VF) for the Project, i.e. functions which should be ensured also after the project closure, to keep alive project's significance and impact on the basis of project's aims and relevance for the participant countries, participants' perceptions etc.

Accordingly, a tentative list of vital functions has been defined with the coordination and it will be shared soon with WPs co-leaders.

VFs identified will be assessed through a SWOT analysis that will be performed during the 1st Project Meeting in Paris, in a dedicated session where an active participation of EpiSouth partners will be promoted. Note that the organisation of the 1st Project Meeting is under the responsibility of WP6, which is accumulating delays due to freezing. As a result, the first Project Meeting will have to be postponed, compared to what expected in the Project Work Plan. Contribution of all country partners in choosing VFs will be crucial in order to agree on an effective sustainability plan. VFs may be of two types: easy to define, i.e. infrastructures or resources, hard to define or to measure, as in case of abstract concepts, like co-ownership or shared responsibility. The latter will be probably the most important key elements in maintaining the network. EpiSouth is a participatory platform co-owned by all the partner countries and all of them expect to benefit from the data and information exchanged through it. That is why is extremely important to precisely define these key factors and to correct identify adequate indicators to measure them.

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.

Activities planned for the next period

First monitoring questionnaire will be delivered with an eight-month delay at M16 in order to collect detailed information on: WPs delays and recuperation plan; WPs progress; level of all different partners' participation (incl. status of co-leadership agreements). Considering that the WP3 is constantly monitoring the Project's activities through the participation to Meetings and TC, the monitoring questionnaires will be submitted to the partners every six months (M16-M22).

The workshop on project outputs evaluation, which was planned during the first Project Meeting that has been postponed, will present the results of monitoring questionnaires and will be scheduled together with the first Project Meeting. The mid-term evaluation report and its presentation will follow the first Project Meeting as already planned, but of course they will be shifted on the time planning according to the date of the first Project Meeting.

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

Non-key expert

The non-key expert (Sabah Boufkhed) has been hired and active for the project from beginning of July. Her inclusion in the WP4 team was delayed due to administrative reasons.

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 . One additional country which has shown interest in participating to the WP4ST could as yet not been included (Libya). Libya was not reachable due to political instability, but recently their representatives informed us that after the current re-organisation phase they will be ready to be involved in.

Exchanges between WP co- leaders

Regular exchanges by e-mail and phone calls with the Turkish co-leader (Handan Kalaycioglu, Refik Saydam National Public Health Agency) are established. Each question, direction to follow and decision is discussed at first and validated between the co-leaders.

Activities:

- The presentation of the mission of WP4 and the corresponding activities were presented by an informative letter to all the ST members (03 August 2011 – *See Annex I 'WP4 ST Informative letter' and 'WP4 Action Plan'*).

- A questionnaire was joined to determine jointly the priority areas which will be addressed (*Annex II 'Qr_Priority_Table_Pathogens.pdf'*). The proposed issues were selected according to their importance in the region, emergence or re-emergence (West-Nile, Dengue, MDR tuberculosis, new influenza strains), cross importance with other work packages (Biosafety) and previously identified as important in EpiSouth (See EpiSouth Report 4/2008 http://www.episouth.org/outputs/wp8/WP8Report_Public_area_FINALE_REV_9-4-08.pdf).

- A first WP4ST teleconference (TC) was organised on the 20th of September 2011 to discuss the results of the Questionnaire. Lebanon and Cyprus who could not participate to the TC were called later to inform them on the discussions and to collect their point of view (*See Annex III 'Agenda_1stWP4TC' and Annex IV 'Minutes_FirstWP4ST_TC.pdf'*). All agreed on the following points:

- Identification of the priority areas.

The identified priority areas for the WP4 are West Nile Virus, Biosafety and Dengue (See Annex V '*Response Qr_Priority_Table_Pathogens.pdf*') which are also crosscutting issues with the other WPs (zoonosis, vector-borne disease [WP6], of IHR concern [WP7]). Influenza was identified as a priority according to the results, but it was agreed, however, that since a lot of influenza-related training and meetings were organised during the past years, due to the A/H1N1pdm 2009 pandemic, additional training was not a priority. As such, it was decided that only networking activities would be organised concerning influenza. Multidrug-resistant Tuberculosis issues will be further discussed with regard to specific activities.

- The Experts committee and the identification of laboratories.

Experts on the priority issues were contacted and asked to participate to the WP4 Experts committee (*See Annex VI 'WP4ST_LIST.pdf'*). An informative letter was sent to the experts, to explain the issues of EpiSouth Plus, and more specifically the WP4 (See Annex VII '*WP4_LetterExperts.pdf*').

A questionnaire (*See Annex VIII 'Draft_Qr_LabCap.pdf'*), aiming at the identification of the minimum requirements (laboratory capacities) for selection of the laboratories which will be involved per country, has been prepared by the WP4 ST. This questionnaire has been shared with the experts team for validation. This validated questionnaire will be sent before the end of November to the national laboratories via the EpiSouth FPs.

Philippe Dubois, will be involved as a IP expert in the WP4 activities. He has an extensive experience in Dengue, West Nile, Biosafety and training for WHO.

- Mapping of the existing biological expertise.

First, an inventory of the networks existing 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 area, 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. We found at least one laboratory per country that could be included in the Laboratory network, except for Kosovo (*See Annex IX 'MAPPING_Expertise.pdf'*). Once the Questionnaire, to assess the laboratory capacities in each country, will be sent and feedback received we could consolidate and improve this first list.

Coordination with other projects and activities

Participation to the first WP7 Steering team (ST) meeting in Rome (21st of July 2011).

The issues of the WP7 were discussed and were crosscutting issues with other WPs as well as for WP4.

Regular meetings with WP6 (InVS, visit and phone calls) on coordination activities. There is also regular exchange by email and phone with the coordination unit.

Outcomes and deliverables achieved

Configuration of the ST

Questionnaire to identify the priority issues and the results

Minutes of the TC

Problems encountered

Organisation of planned activities took more time than expected, especially towards the delays to get the responses back / of the exchanges with the partners. This was also partly due to political instability in the Region.

Additionally, WP6 constraints (SANCO) have influenced our progress.

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.

How were problems resolved

According to the identified problems, the activities plan was rescheduled (*See X Annex 'Revised Schedule.pdf'*) and the involvement of the non-key expert will help with the planning and execution of the activities.

Activities planned for the next period

- Meeting of the Experts committee
- Identification of Laboratories interested in participation
- Mapping of existing expertise (laboratories and networks)
- Meeting with the Heads of laboratories
- Identification of the laboratories needs for diagnoses of priority diseases in the Region
- One-week training module at IP Paris for 26 laboratory staff (17 non-EU participants)

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

Specific objectives for the WP5

Promoting common procedures in interoperability Generic Preparedness and Risk management among the countries involved in the Network.

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in capacities for preparedness and generic preparedness plans in EPISOUTH region
- Organising short term capacity building sessions to comply with identified needs and other WP objectives
- Testing implemented capacities to face a potential emergency event in the region through a simulation exercise

Special remarks to be highlighted

Activities planned for WP5 have been performed despite some difficulties faced within the reported period. The situation in Arabic countries affected some aspects of WP5:

- Regular communication among the Steering Team, and the rest of the region (for requesting documents among participants in the SHIPSAN course)
- The data collection related the Survey on Capacity Needs
- Establishment of formal agreement with the Institut de Santé Publique of Algeria.

Despite obstacles found and the assumption of some delays, the foreseen activities have been carried out.

Activities undertaken:

- Inter- Institutional agreements. Institutional agreement among Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISC III) and Institut National de Santé Public and ISC III has faced unforeseen difficulties and it's not still been signed.

The document for formal collaboration has been reviewed by all the ISCIII involved departments and also by the co-leaders, but INSP is still pending of approval and signature. Difficulties encountered are referring to internal changes INSP-Algeria specifically three different directors have been nominated from January up to date.

Alternative ways for solving the situation are currently being discussing.

It should be noted that the missing signature of the Agreement is not affecting, and will not affect, the participation of Algeria INSP co-leader and staff to the project activities.

- Part time spent by non Official staff: extra people have been involved in the WP5 team based in Madrid.

One Junior Epidemiologist focused on the Capacities and Training Needs Survey, and two Junior Epidemiologists focused on the preparation of the Simulation Exercise.

This ISCIII WP5 Team has been part of the WP5 co-lead team for developing the questionnaire and phone interviews for the survey and the general frame and scenario for the simulation exercise to be carried out.

- WP5 Steering Team. During Capacities Needs Assessment preparation and more specifically during the pilot phase of the Questionnaire to be launched, countries which used to participate, such as Egypt and Syria, have been absent. This may be due political and social instability in Middle East and North Africa.

- 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 was uploaded in the EpiSouth website the 6th July after some schedule changes coordinated by ISS for avoiding overlap of questionnaire to be responded by National Focal Points at the same time. This will have a little effect in WP5 schedule of activities.

Short interviews to be done by phone or skype will complete the information needed for covering 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 the upcoming simulation exercise

Collected information's provided capacities need priorities to be fulfilled in the workshops and training sessions.

- Simulation exercise preparation

In order to include necessary questions in the survey the first steps for the 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 Madrid located SE Team was set up during the first six months and has continued working during this second six month period. Two specific Junior Epidemiologists have been working in the simulation exercise design during the period.

- Participation of EPISOUTH WP5 at the SHIPSAN TRAINET Final Conference

SHIPSAN invited EPISOUTH representatives to attend their Final Conference held in Athens the 4th October 2011. The short meetings hold with responsible for training allowed the exchanging of information and inputs for improving collaboration and enlarging it to other WPs.

-Other activities undertaken:

- Establishing links with the EPIET and Field Epidemiology Training Programmes.
- Dissemination of EPISOUTH PLUS Project and WP5 activities at EPI JOURNAL Sessions held at National Centre of Epidemiology.

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

This activity was scheduled, carried out and reported during the first six month period. However, due to difficulties in obtaining documents and receipts from participants, the reimbursement resulted delayed. Additional tasks such us e-mail sending to the participants and ISC III administration requirements have been setting up for solving the reimbursement. At the end of September this question was definitely solved. Invoices and payments related to this activity have been paid.

- Milestones and deliverables achieved

- Questionnaire was launched and information has been collected during this period.
- Data Collection (20 out of 27 responded. From them 15 on line, 1 by fax, 4 by e-mail).

Activities planned for the next period

- 2 workshops/training sessions
- 1 training in Algeria
- 1 ST Meeting
- Final Report of capacities needs for Preparedness and Response
- Continuing the preparation of the Simulation Exercise

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 workpackage will be co-led by one EU and one non-EU Institution or Network.
- Each WP co-leader has received a defined budget in order to support the EpiSouth PLUS activities.
- The WPs co-leaders are 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 ensure the constitution of their respective WP Steering Teams (WPST) which collaborates to the implementation for the planned activities.
- The WP6 co-leader is the consortium MECIDS (Middle-East Consortium on Infectious Diseases and Surveillance) a network composed by Jordan, Israel and Palestine and working in the field of infectious diseases.
- MECIDS has an expertise in dealing in a very delicate context as well as in health data exchange which will be a very valuable input for the network. First contacts were made through the participation of EpiSouth (WP1 & WP6) to the MECIDS executive board on 27-28 November 2010.
- Administrative process has been launched in order to concretise the agreement between MECIS, EpiSouth PLUS and the InVS in charge of the WP6 coordination.
- Exchanges were made between the Institut de Veille Sanitaire and MECIDS on several points in order to make possible the drafting of an agreement between both institutions. Administrative and financial data (working plan, provisional budget, Search for Common Ground Jerusalem registration document, etc.) were exchanged between the financial services of the InVS and Sharon Rosen, the Co-Director of the Search for Common Ground (SFCG) at the Jerusalem office which hosts the MECIDS consortium.
- To date, although a final version of the agreement InVS-MECIDS is available and ready for signature, the process has not been finalised due to the freeze of the WP6 activities. The InVS was not in the position to engage such funds without any guarantee of WP6 cost reimbursement.
- Unfortunately, considering the absence of answer regarding the defreeze of the WP6 activities and the fact that the "costs will not be eligible from 5 July until the revised SOP [...] has been approved by SANCO" ; the signature of the MECIDS-InVS agreement and the related funds transfer have been put on stand by awaiting for the Commission's reply.

The WP6 mission in non-EU countries

- No mission performed due to the freezing of the WP6 activities.
- Usually, missions to the countries are associated to meetings into EpiSouth countries when the meeting is performed on several days. This is a way to acknowledge the EpiSouth countries in hosting the meeting and also a way to save time and money (one flight ticket for both meeting and mission visit). This time, Balkans countries were supposed to be part of the mission but unfortunately, the mission was not possible due to the freezing of activities.

The WP6 steering team meeting in Montenegro: 5-6 July 2011

The WP6 steering team meeting was kindly hosted in Montenegro on 05 & 06 July 2011 thanks to the collaboration of the Montenegro Institute of Public Health and our EpiSouth focal points, Dragan Lausevic and Zoran Vratnica.

This meeting was the opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with the WP6 ST members, as planned in the WP6 working plan and the AIDCO agreement.

The aims of this meeting were the following:

- Overview of the Epidemic Intelligence activities 2010-2011 and the EpiSouth PLUS project
- An in-depth discussion and analysis of early warning systems and their interconnections with EpiSouth
- Optimisation of information sharing: practical issues and challenges
- Definitions of SOP (standard operating procedures) for the EpiSouth data sharing;

Participating countries for WP6 steering team meeting: 9 countries, 18 participants

Israel, Kosovo, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Tunisia, Turkey, France and Italy (as observer).

Partners: MECIDS, WHO- Geneva and ECDC

Missing: Algeria, Malta, Jordan (difficulties to obtain Visa) and Palestine (difficulties to obtain Schengen Visa).

Here below the contents and the agenda of the WP6 steering team meeting:

DAY I.

Introduction & opening ceremony

Presentation of Montenegro public health activities

Overview of WP6 activities in 2010

Results of EpiSouth alert platform 's assessment

Legal framework & principles of information exchange

DAY II.

Presentation of the new EpiSouth-EPIS platform

Principles of information exchanges & articulation with other EWS

SOP: Standard Operating Procedures

Conclusion

(See *Annex XI- WP6 Meeting's Minutes for further details*)

The EpiSouth Alert platform's assessment

The EpiSouth secure platform for alert and data exchanges was created during the 1st phase of the EpiSouth project and is operational since November 2009.

As of 14th October 2011, a total of **109 alerts** were posted in the EpiSouth secure platform.

According to the EU-EpiSouth PLUS agreement, one of the EpiSouth-plus' objective is the development of synergies that will allow interoperability with other European and other relevant Early warning and surveillance systems in collaboration with ECDC and WHO.

In order to ease this process with European Union Early Warning System, a new EpiSouth platform is under development in an 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 has been performed by the WP6 team. This survey was done among all EpiSouth secure platform users in order to perform an evaluation and try during the 2nd phase of the project to improve this tool thanks to countries comments.

There were 2 objectives for this survey:

- First, to consolidate the tool developed during the phase 1, and improve its quality.
- Second, for the EpiSouth-EPIS platform under development at the ECDC: to include some modification and improvements. This new EpiSouth-EPIS platform should ease the interoperability between the different EW systems.

The evaluation-questionnaire has been shared with ECDC with the idea to explore current and new functionalities to be included in the new EPIS-EpiSouth platform. The questionnaire has been shared with all participating countries and the EpiSouth platform users through the EpiSouth website with an active collaboration with WP2 and Cineca (see attached screen shot).

The questionnaire was put on line in the secure EpiSouth platform and was on closed on 31st May 2011.

Results from this survey were available in June 2011 and have been integrated in the specifications of the future EpiSouth-EPIS-based platform.

Here below some details about this survey

Methodology:

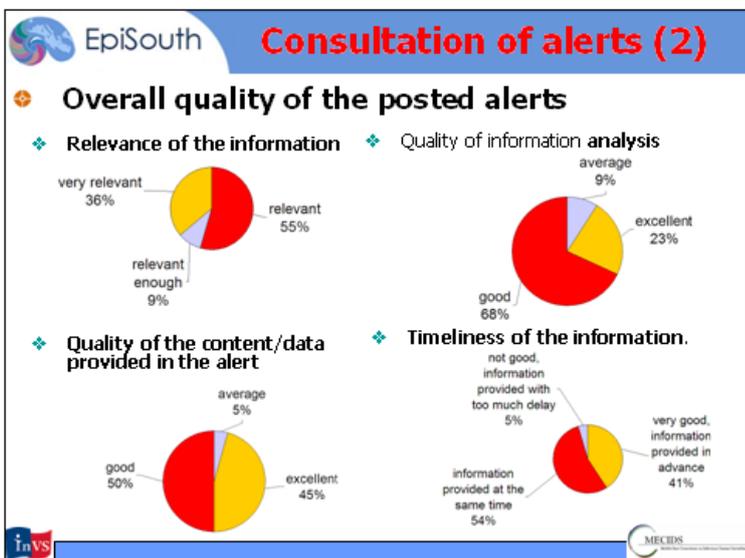
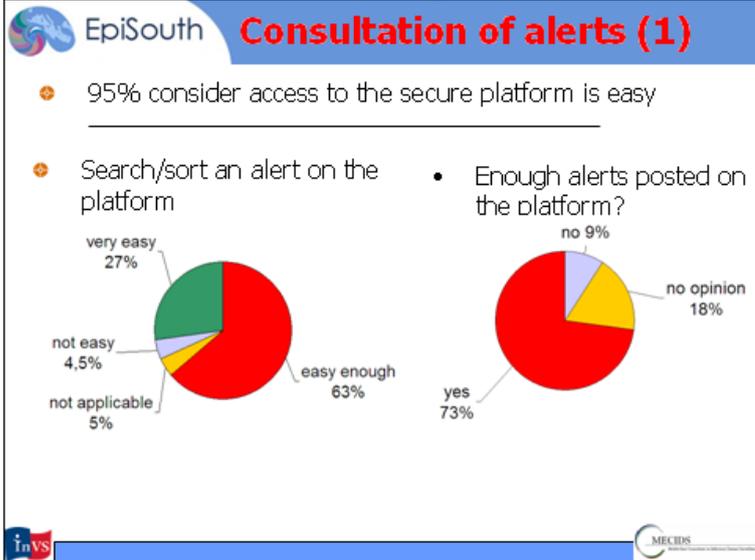
- The questionnaire was online from 21st April to 31st May 2011.
- 22 persons over 54 (40%) answered the questionnaire.
- 7 of the 22 respondents (32%) are from Non –EU countries.

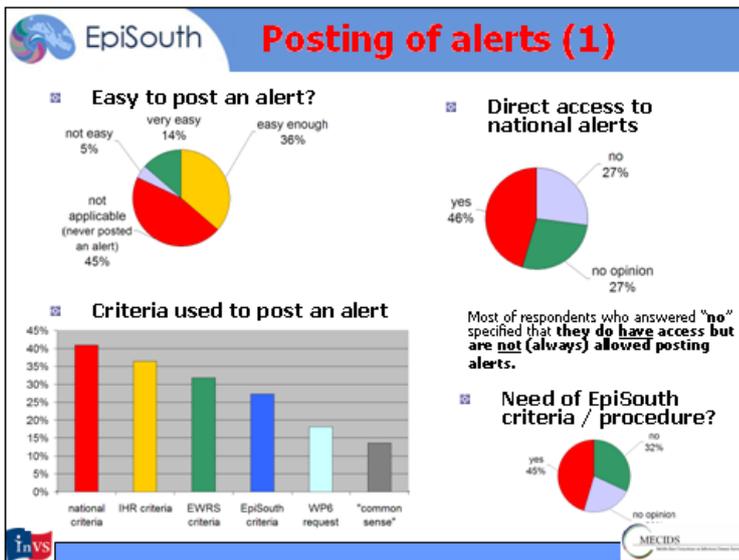
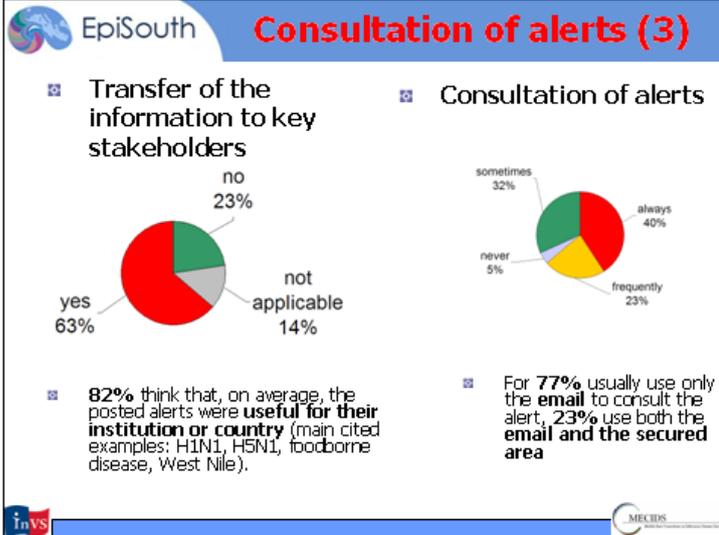
Results:

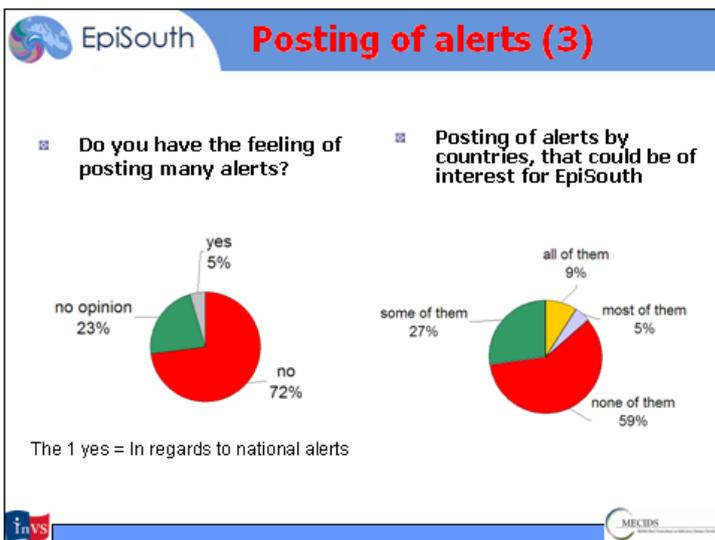
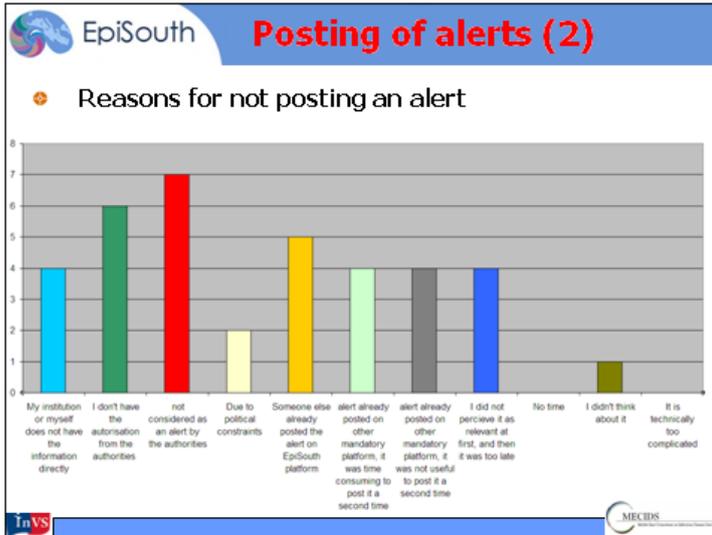
cf. slides below.

Propositions made by countries to try to ease the participation of focal points in the posting of alerts:

- Get commitment and blanket authorisation from higher levels (MOH, director of NPI) and communicable disease departments
- Having at least 1 focal point who should be at a decision making position, commitment from focal points in posting alerts,
- Increase number of focal points
- Having a clarification for EU countries of EWRS obligation/restriction,
- Having an official and written procedure (shared at a high level),
- Proceeding with an update of alerts posted (every 3 months),
- Continue to solicit countries when information is perceived as relevant for EpiSouth
- Simplify the alerts platform; ease the posting procedure, having less information on each page.







Regarding the technical development of the EPIS-EpiSouth platform with ECDC, 2 Constructive face to face meetings between ECDC and WP6 teams have allowed to streamline the process and the Plan of Action (PoA) has been finalised.

Several teleconferences were done regularly with the ECDC developer officers.

eWEB bulletin: a new sending process and registration form

Through years and months, people asking to be registered to receive the eWEB bulletin is growing. The monitoring of the large number of subscriptions and the large mailing list became difficult for the WP6 team. Through our active collaboration with the WP2 and CINECA, the WP6 asked CINECA to propose 2 easier ways for the eWEB bulletin sending procedures done each week:

- For the eWEB upload in the public website
- For the eWEB sending to all recipients based on the large mailing list.

The 2 procedures/sending tools are operational since several months. The new procedures are simple and ease the work done every week for the eWEB bulletin sending.

These 2 new procedures came in complement to the subscription tool developed during the 1st semester of the EpiSouth PLUS project phase (<http://www.episouth.org/newsletter.php>).

Here below, screen print of the 2 new platform of bulletin launching:

Figure 1. The new procedure to upload the eWEB bulletin in the public website.

Create Bulletin - Weekly

Home - Add content

Title *

Date of bulletin *

Month * Day * Year *

Aug 5 2011

Date for the correct order of the file.

File of bulletin *

Parcourir... Upload

Files must be less than 32 MB.
Allowed file types: txt doc pdf rtf xls zip ppt pps.

Revision information

New revision

Revision log message

Provide an explanation of the changes you are making. This will help other authors understand your motivations.

Save

Figure 2. The new procedure the eWEB bulletin sending to all recipients.

OpenNewsletter 2.5

Home Subscribers Compose Requests Members Logout

Compose Newsletter

Subject:

From:

EPI SOUTH_alerte <EPI SOUTH_alerte@mvs.sante.fr>

Type:

text/html

Message:

Attachment (optional):

Parcourir...

Preview Send

For any problem, please contact c.dellicasa@cinca.it

MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES: 2nd bi-annual report 2011

- **Please refer to the WP6 table: Overview of 1st year activities – 2nd semester.**

DESCRIPTION OF INDICATORS OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

EpiSouth Epidemiological Weekly Bulletin (eWEB)

The EpiSouth electronic weekly epidemiological bulletin (e-Web) has been issued since 19th March 2008. Since March 2009, 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.

For the 2nd EpiSouth PLUS semester (15th April 2010 to 14th October 2011): 26 eWEB bulletins (from n°161 to n°186) have been issued.

October 2011

- October 20 2011  [Eweb 187_20_10_11.pdf](#)
- October 13 2011  [Eweb 186_06_10_11.pdf](#)
- October 06 2011  [Eweb 185_06_10_11.pdf](#)

September 2011

- September 29 2011  [Eweb 184_29_09_11.pdf](#)
- September 22 2011  [Eweb 183_22_09_11.pdf](#)
- September 15 2011  [Eweb 182_15_09_11.pdf](#)
- September 09 2011  [Eweb 181_08_09_11.pdf](#)
- September 01 2011  [Eweb 180_01_09_11.pdf](#)

August 2011

- August 25 2011  [Eweb 179_25_08_11.pdf](#)
- August 18 2011  [Eweb 178_18_08_11.pdf](#)
- August 11 2011  [Eweb 177_11_08_11.pdf](#)
- August 05 2011  [Eweb 176_04_08_11.pdf](#)

July 2011

- July 29 2011  [Eweb 175_28_07_11.pdf](#)
- July 21 2011  [Eweb 174_21_07_11.pdf](#)
- July 15 2011  [Eweb 173_07_07_11.pdf](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [next >](#) [last >>](#)

July 2011

- July 07 2011  [eWEB n°172](#)

June 2011

- June 30 2011  [Eweb 171_30_06_11.pdf](#)
- June 23 2011  [Eweb 170_22_06_11.pdf](#)
- June 16 2011  [eWEB 169_16_06_11.pdf](#)
- June 09 2011  [eWEB 168_09_06_11.pdf](#)
- June 02 2011  [eWEB 167_02_06_11.pdf](#)

May 2011

- May 26 2011  [eWEB_166_26_05_11.pdf](#)
- May 19 2011  [eWEB_165_18_05_11.pdf](#)
- May 12 2011  [eWEB_164_12_05_11.pdf](#)
- May 05 2011  [eWEB_163_04_05_11.pdf](#)

April 2011

- April 28 2011  [eWEB_162_28_04_11.pdf](#)
- April 21 2011  [eWEB_161_20_04_11.pdf](#)
- April 14 2011  [eWEB_160_14_04_11.pdf](#)
- April 08 2011  [eWEB_159_07_04_11.pdf](#)

March 2011

- March 31 2011  [eWEB_158_31_03_11.pdf](#)

[« first](#) [< previous](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [next >](#) [last »](#)

Scientific seminars and congresses

During this 6 months period, the promotion of EpiSouth epidemic intelligence and cross border alerts was performed:

Les Journées de l'Institut de Veille Sanitaire - on 28-29 April 2011 in Paris (France). Every 2 years, the Institut de Veille Sanitaire is organising a nationwide congress on public health focusing on important public health issues and emerging diseases. This time, the WP6 team had the opportunity to present during this congress the "West Nile outbreak in the Mediterranean region, August- October 2010". It was the occasion to exchanges with French partners the EpiSouth experience in a zoonosis large outbreak. (information available at: <http://photos.hexagone.tv/0000006120/photos/veille%20et%20surveillance%20270411.pdf>)

Les Journées Inter-Cire de l'Institut de Veille Sanitaire – on 27 May 2011 in Saint Maurice (France). Every year, the Institut de Veille Sanitaire is organising internal nationwide meeting with all its representatives from all regions in France and all French overseas territories representatives. At this occasion, the EpiSouth experience on the West Nile epidemic was presented.

The 4th EurAsia congress of infectious Diseases on 01-05 June 2011 in Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina): presentation of "The Early Warning and Epidemic Intelligence in the Mediterranean regions and Balkans countries". The participation to this congress was very appreciated by Balkans countries which have seen the added value of the EpiSouth network in the Mediterranean area. It was also an opportunity to meet our Focal points from Bosnia & Herzegovina. The presentation available: <http://www.episouthnetwork.org/sites/default/files/outputs/WP6%20presentation.pdf>

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED and How problems were resolved

The General direction of the Institut de Veille Sanitaire would like to bring to the attention that the frozen WP6 situation delayed the implementation of the WP6 activities and thus had an impact on the deliverables' calendar, especially:

- The next EpiSouth annual meeting was expected to be organised in Paris during the 1st quarter 2012. The organisation of such large meeting requires anticipation and down payment is necessary to secure reservations. Although we are aware of the possible impacts on other planned EpiSouth activities, the Paris meeting will have to be deferred at least to the second quarter 2012.
- The collaboration with our co-leader MECIDS (Middle-East Consortium for Infectious Diseases surveillance) and the signature of the agreement and the related funds transfer had also to be put on stand by awaiting the Commission's reply. (More details in the section 1.1)
- The non possibility to perform mission into non-EU countries.

However, as described above, the WP6 team has ensured, even during the "frozen period", the routine activities of epidemic intelligence (including e-week bulletins) and the collaboration with ECDC for risk assessment.

At 14th October 2011, the situation and problems have not been resolved.

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 second semester the WP7 activities were particularly developed, because the key-expert who is acting as WP7 co-leader (Flavia Riccardo) has been recruited in June (with an anticipation of 3 months respecting to the planned schedule) and the working agreement with the co-leader institution (WHO-Lyon) has been signed in June.

WP7 co-leaders and Steering Team worked to identify EpiSouth priority IHR related capacities for in depth analysis. The outcome of this work was summarized in the report Level of Implementation of IHR 2005 in the EpiSouth Region that was shared with Steering Team members.

Discussion and fine tuning of the priorities to address took place in Rome on the 20- 21st of July during the first WP7 ST meeting that involved the WP7 ST Members and Focal Points of the EpiSouth sub-region where the meeting was held. At the end of this meeting a main findings report was produced in agreement of the meeting participants.

Following this an analysis of available documents concerning the identified area of focus of WP7 was started in order to formulate the in depth survey as planned. This activity is ongoing.

Level of Implementation of IHR 2005 in the EpiSouth Region

In order to identify priority areas to address in the field of IHR implementation in the EpiSouth Region, a draft survey was elaborated and discussed among the WP7 co-leaders. From the questions that emerged, it soon became clear to the WHO partner that this information had already been collected by WHO in the 2010 IHR implementation assessment. However this data had never been released just for EpiSouth Countries. For this reason it was decided to opt for an EpiSouth specific analysis of this data rather than perform another survey.

The advantages of opting for this choice were the avoidance of a useless compilation exercise by EpiSouth FPs and the possibility of attaining more detailed information from the EpiSouth Countries' IHR NFPs standpoint that could be then discussed with EpiSouth FPs.

A report of 35 pages describing the implementation of IHR 2005 in EpiSouth Countries was drafted in July. This document offers a novel elaboration and analysis of data that had been only disseminated as globally aggregated. The document was finalized by the co-leaders of the Work Package between May and July 2011 also through telephone conferences. Due to the increased regional specificity of the data presented, at that stage WHO cleared this report as "Not for public distribution". It has therefore been uploaded on the EpiSouth Network Working Area but not made publicly available. Later this report has been cleared by WHO for public distribution and will be revised and posted soon as a publicly available project report.

First Steering Team Meeting

The First WP7 Steering Team Meeting took place in Rome on the 20-21st of July 2011. Invited participants were ST members, the WHO EURO IHR Contact Point and Focal points of the EpiSouth Subregion where the meeting was being held (that included Morocco, Algeria, Spain, France, Croatia, Malta and Libya). *See the Annex XII WP7 ST Meeting's Outcomes for further details.*

Seventeen people participated to the meeting. Among those there was at least one co-leader of each WP of the EpiSouth Plus project. On the first day all FPs were invited to present key achievements and challenges in IHR implementation in their countries. Those who were not directly involved in the IHR NFP activities, were encouraged to elaborate their presentation in collaboration with IHR NFPs and/or delegate an IHR NFP member to attend the meeting. On the second day the results of the WHO data analysis were validated in light of the EpiSouth FP's contributions made the day before. In addition the future focus of WP7 and how this very transversal workpackage can fit and work best in the general structure of the EpiSouth Plus project were debated in depth.

The first meeting of the WP7 ST was successful in consolidating the WP7 Steering Team, in identifying priority areas to address and in establishing the need for a stronger cross-cutting collaboration among Work Packages of the EpiSouth Plus Project. The main output of the meeting was the definition of the area WP7 will specifically address through an in depth survey, that is the coordination of surveillance and response between Points of Entry and National systems.

What also emerged was a possible cross cutting topic that might be approached by all work packages, i.e. surveillance, identification and management of health events caused by vector borne diseases. If this is accepted, the outputs could be summarized in a single strategic document. This position was brought to the attention of both WP1- coordination co-leaders who were both present at the meeting and who will share this position with the Steering Committee, DEVCO & SANCO (if changes proposed alter the project deliverables) and subsequently with the Project Focal Points to eventually agree on a common approach.

During the meeting the FP from Morocco asked to join the WP7 ST and this request was accepted by WP7 ST participants and coleaders. In addition the WHO EURO IHR Contact Point (CP) expressed interest in following the WP activities. Considering the advantage of gaining feedback from both IHR NFPs and CPs, he has been granted access to the NWA sections dedicated to WP7 in agreement with WP1.

To date the WP7 ST is composed of 9 Countries, one Network and 2 co-leaders, making it one of the most numerous in the Project in line with the wide participative approach adopted in the Action Plan presented in the Project Kick off meeting in February 2011.

In depth analysis of selected core capacity/ies: II survey design

An analysis of information available on IHR related capacities implemented at points of entry through the WHO IHR monitoring questionnaire, the WHO IHR 2005 and the WHO PoE Core capacity assessment tool was started to identify better aspects to address in the in depth survey design. Based on this information, a preliminary draft of the questionnaire will be elaborated and shared with the WP7 ST members for comments before finalization.

Problems encountered

The ongoing Mediterranean crisis hindered the rapidity of communications among Countries and made the participation of some FPs to the WP7 ST face to face meeting impossible. In the field of activities of WP7 this translated in a slower consolidation of the ST and in the need to avoid overburdening countries.

Although this was not observed in the period of this report 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.

Corrections set up to overcome the problem

WHO made aggregated data collected for the 2010 Assessment on IHR implementation from 18 Countries within the EpiSouth Network available. Based on this information the priority area to analyse in the coming months was defined and validated first with the WP7 ST during the first WP7 ST Meeting.

Activities planned for the next period

During the second year of activities the WP7 team will finalize and publish its first WP report that provides the results of the first analysis of data on IHR implementation in the EpiSouth Region and identifies the priority area where to focus for its in depth survey. The second survey questionnaire will be posted online for all focal points and results collected and analysed in a draft II survey report as planned. Discussion and validation of those preliminary results will take place during the 1st project meeting.

4. Annexes

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

Silvia Declich
EpiSouth Plus Project leader

