

EPISOUTH PLUS REPORT 3/2011

THE EPISOUTH PLUS PROJECT

CROSS-BORDER EPIDEMIC INTELLIGENCE EVALUATION

Results from the evaluation of the EpiSouth secure platform from
countries users

Coralie Giese¹, Fatima Ait-Belghiti¹, Alex Leventhal², Sari Hussein², Philippe Barboza¹

¹Institut de Veille Sanitaire (InVS), Saint Maurice Cedex, France
²MECIDS - Middle East Consortium for Infectious Diseases Surveillance

and the WP6 Steering Team

on behalf of the EpiSouth Network

DECEMBER 2011



The EpiSouth Plus project is co-funded by the European Union DG-SANCO/EAHC and EuropeAid together with the participating national partner Institutions. The financial support of the Italian Ministry of Health and ECDC is also acknowledged.

The Project is led by the Italian National Institute of Health and counselled by an Advisory Board composed by EC, ECDC, WHO and other international experts.

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

The EpiSouth Plus project's reports are freely available in the public domain (www.episouthnetwork.org) and may be used and reprinted without special permission; citation as to source, however, is required.

Suggested citation: C. Giese, F. Ait-Belghiti, A. Leventhal, S. Husseini, P. Barboza on behalf of the EpiSouth Network. *The EpiSouth Plus Project. Cross-border epidemic intelligence evaluation –results from the evaluation of the EpiSouth secure platform from countries users. EpiSouth Plus Report 3/2011.* Available at: <http://www.episouthnetwork.org/content/cross-border-epidemic-intelligence>

EPISOUTH PLUS PROJECT OFFICE

Project Leader

Silvia Declich
Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion
Rome, Italy
e-mail: siilvia.declich@iss.it

WP1 Co-Leaders – Coordination of the project

Maria Grazia Dente
Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion
Rome, Italy
e-mail: mariagrazia.dente@iss.it

Mondher Bejaoui
Ministère de la Santé Publique
Primary Health Care Directorate
Tunis, Tunisia
e-mail: mondher.bejaoui@rns.tn

WP2 Co-Leaders – Dissemination of the project

Massimo Fabiani/Valeria Alfonsi
Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion
Rome, Italy
e-mail: massimo.fabiani@iss.it
e-mail: valeria.alfonsi@iss.it

Dragan Lausevic
Institute of Public Health
Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
Podgorica, Montenegro
e-mail: dragan.lausevic@ijzcg.me

WP3 Leader - Evaluation of the project

Giuseppe Salamina
ASL TO1
Torino, Italy
e-mail: giuseppe.salamina@aslto1.it

WP4 Co-Leader - Laboratory Network

Kathleen Victoir
Institut Pasteur
Direction des Affaires Internationales
Paris Cedex, France
e-mail: kathleen.victoir@pasteur.fr

Handan Kalacioglu
Refik Saydam National Hygiene Center
Ministry of Health of Turkey
Ankara, Turkey
e-mail: h.kalaycioglu@hotmail.com

WP5 Co-Leader –Preparedness Plan and Risk Management

Fernando Simon Soria/ Concepcion Martin Pando
Instituto de Salud Carlos III – Carlos III Health Institute
National Epidemiology Centre
Madrid, Spain
e-mail: fsimon@isciii.es
e-mail: cmartinpando@isciii.es

Djohar Hannoun
Institut National de Santé Publique of Algeria
Department of Health Information
Alger, Algeria
e-mail: hannound@yahoo.fr

WP6 Co-Leader – Cross-border Epidemic Intelligence

Philippe Barboza/Fatima Belghiti
Institut de Veille Sanitaire – French Institute for Public Health Surveillance
Department International and Tropical Diseases
Saint Maurice Cedex, France
e-mail: p.barboza@invs.sante.fr
e-mail: f.belghiti@invs.sante.fr

Alex Leventhal/ Asa'd Ramlawi/ Mohamed Husein Adel Belbeisi/ Sari Husseini
MECIDS - Middle East Consortium for Infectious Diseases Surveillance
e-mail: alex.leventhal@moh.health.gov.il
e-mail: ramlawi_asad@hotmail.com
e-mail: fetp@wanadoo.jo
e-mail: shusseini@sfcg.org

WP7 Co-Leader – Facilitating IHR implementation

Flavia Riccardo
Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Italian National Institute of Health
National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion
Rome, Italy
e-mail: flavia.riccardo@iss.it

Pierre Nabeth
World Health Organization
International Health Regulations Coordination WHO/HSE/IHR
Office for National Epidemic Preparedness and Response (LYO)
Lyon, France
e-mail: nabethp@who.int

THE EPISOUTH NETWORK

EPISOUTH PROJECT (2006-10)

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

The Project “EpiSouth” started in October 2006 with the financial support of the EU DG-SANCO together with the Italian Ministry of Health and has been closed in June 2010. As per June 2010, EpiSouth is a Network of 27 countries (9 EU and 17 non-EU countries plus 1 candidate to enlargement country). It is therefore the biggest inter-country collaborative effort in the Mediterranean region.

EPISOUTH PLUS PROJECT (2010-13)

A new phase of the EpiSouth Network activities has been approved and started on 15 October 2010 and is expected to last until 15 April 2013.

The new phase implies a shift of the Network’s activities to a wider approach. Building on the knowledge of regional gaps and needs identified during the first EpiSouth implementation in the fields of Epidemic Intelligence, Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Migrants, Cross Border Emerging Zoonoses and Training in field/applied epidemiology, the new EpiSouth Plus Project aims at contributing to the control of public health threats and other bio-security risks in the Mediterranean region and South-East Europe.

OBJECTIVE AND ORGANIZATION

The EpiSouth Plus project is aimed at increasing the health security in the Mediterranean area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening the preparedness to common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels in the countries of the EpiSouth Network in the framework of the International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation. The reinforcement of relations of trust in the region is an objective and an instrument in the scope of Project’s implementation.

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

The project is organized in seven Work Packages (WP), jointly co-led by EU and non-EU countries. WP leaders work in strict contact with the corresponding WP Steering Team, while a Steering Committee,

constituted by all WP leaders, and the Project General Assembly, constituted by all participants, are responsible for the general strategic decisions. Finally, an Advisory Board, constituted by representatives of the collaborating institutions and external experts, provide support for the revision of relevant documents and recommendations.

ACTIVITIES

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

- 1) Establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Laboratories Network to facilitate common threats detection in the countries involved (WP4).
- 2) Promotion of common procedures in Generic Preparedness and Risk Management Plans among the countries involved (WP5).
- 3) Enhancing Mediterranean Early Warning Systems (EWS) and cross-border Epidemic Intelligence allowing alerts and Epidemic Intelligence information sharing among EpiSouth countries and developing interoperability with other European EW platform, especially EWRS, as forecast by the current EU legislation (WP6).
- 4) Facilitating IHR implementation through the production of a strategic document, with guidelines based on specific assessments for describing how national plans/legislations can interact with IHR requirements (WP7).

EpiSouth PLUS: Epidemic Intelligence background and achievements

During the 1st phase

To fulfil their public health mission, states must not only exert a continuous monitoring of their population's health, but also to set up a capacity to identify any medical risk emerging internationally. The EpiSouth WP6 established a common platform on "epidemic intelligence" where participating countries may find broad internationally as well as regionally focused information.

A total of 27 countries have joined EpiSouth project, highlighting the common need to exchange health information across the Mediterranean and the Balkans and to strengthen early warning capacities at Mediterranean scales.

Since 5 years, perceptions and understanding of both Epidemic Intelligence (EI) and Cross Border (CB) have notably evolved since the first meeting in 2007. An evident sign of improvement is the high countries response rate to information requests regarding the public health event confirmation or data sharing.

The results of activities implemented during the 5 past years correspond to a gradual implementation strategy. During the first phase, the project focused on the evaluation of the regional context and the elaboration of adequate strategies acceptable by the countries. The active involvement of participating countries either through their representative within the WP6 steering group or during plenary session was actively promoted.

Majors outputs

Since December 2007, Epidemic Intelligence criteria and principles were adopted by all participating countries, the most appropriate type of communication supports tailored for EpiSouth countries were developed and implemented:

- First, the EpiSouth electronic weekly epidemiological bulletin (e-Web) has been issued since 19th March 2008 and is available on the EpiSouth website since April 2008. 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.
- Second, thematic notes: They are short documents produced to complement other communication formats especially the e-Web. They are produced when a rapid and wide dissemination is required, in order to provide in-depth analysis of a more complex event (e.g. multiple countries epidemics) or to update knowledge on a given health topic. They are produced on an *ad hoc* basis and provide background information, facts on the current health event and element for its interpretation.
- **Last, the early warning secure cross-border platform:** tailored to EpiSouth needs and operational since November 2009.
 - During the 1st phase of the EpiSouth project, it was too early to assess its use and performances.
 - Its evaluation and the process to launch a phase of improvement were planned for the 2nd phase of the project. However, the high use of the secure platform during the A(H1N1) pandemic proved its usefulness.

Articulation with pre-existing systems

Obviously, the EpiSouth EI and CB activities especially the early warning function takes its full scope when replaced in the global context. First of all, under International Health Regulation (IHR) but also within European Union regulation, countries have mandatory obligation to notify health threats. However, both systems have specific objectives (e.g. worldwide versus regional), focuses (e.g. EU only countries) and legal constraints that limit information sharing (e.g. information shared in some systems are regulated and thus restricted to a limited list of users and extension of the beneficiaries –event to another secure system- could be very difficult to obtain).

The main objective of the EpiSouth platform is thus to allow the circulation of information that is of interest to the Mediterranean countries, that would not respond to mandatory notification criteria, or that could not be readily accessible to other (e.g. information posted on EWRS is accessible to EU countries only).

EpiSouth early warning platform acts in synergy and conjunction with these regulatory systems and aims at facilitating the dissemination of information that would otherwise not be possible or too delayed (not timely).

EI and CB activities implemented in EpiSouth differ fundamentally from the previously mentioned diseases surveillance networks. Although, some of the diseases surveillance systems include non-EU countries, none covers the 27 EpiSouth countries.

Therefore, EpiSouth EI-CB and diseases surveillance systems are complementary, as disease surveillance network could be the source of information that would be efficiently disseminated to all Mediterranean countries by EpiSouth. Likewise, EpiSouth could be a source of information for the disease surveillance systems especially regarding areas outside of their catchment area. It can also complement the other EW systems.

The EpiSouth Alert platform's assessment and EPIS-EpiSouth new platform development

General Objectives

The EpiSouth secure platform for alert and data exchanges was created during the 1st phase of the EpiSouth project. 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.

Interoperability of systems

EpiSouth-PLUS will enable the further development of health information exchange in the region. A special focus has been then placed on CB alerts and EpiSouth PLUS continue to require a specifically dedicated early warning system. Nevertheless, further reduction of duplication is essential. The synergy between WHO, ECDC and EpiSouth is not only desirable but essential. EpiSouth has identified solutions allowing bilateral interoperability and cross-fertilisation with pre-existing EI and early warning & alert systems and in the first place those supported by ECDC, the European commission and WHO (including regional offices).

Establish balanced communication exchanges:

In regards to the early warning component, it is decisive for all countries to actively participate. However, for EU countries, it is crucial also to strengthen the information exchanges with ECDC and European networks to secure fair ways of communication. The best guarantee of success for EpiSouth is by building a strong and balanced partnership..

Specific Objectives and Methods

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. Thus, for the development of this new EpiSouth platform with ECDC, it was relevant to ask EpiSouth users which functions should be added or modified or improved.

In consequence, the review of the current EpiSouth –Alert platform planned for the 2nd phase of the project, included questions related to improvements and modifications.

This platform survey - launched by the WP6 team - was done among all EpiSouth secure platform users in order to perform an evaluation of the existing system , taking into consideration the experience gained in the first five years of the project in order to improve the tool thanks to countries comments.

This survey had 2 objectives:

- Firstly, to consolidate the tool developed during the phase 1 and improve its characteristics.
- Secondly, to include proposed modifications and improvements in the EpiSouth-EPIS platform under development at the ECDC. This new EpiSouth-EPIS platform should ease the interoperability between the different EW systems.

The evaluation-questionnaire has been shared with ECDC in order 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 of WP2 and Cineca.

The electronic questionnaire was put online in the secure EpiSouth platform from 21st April to 31st May 2011. The results from this survey were available in June 2011 and have been integrated in the specifications of the future EpiSouth-EPIS-based platform.

Questions related to the following issues were asked:

The frequency of alerts consultation; the quality of data, the relevance of information; the analysis of information provided; the timeliness of the information provided; the posting of alerts; the usefulness and the access of alerts; etc.

Regarding the technical development of the EPIS-EpiSouth platform with ECDC, two constructive “face to face” meetings between ECDC and WP6 teams have allowed streamlining the process and the Plan of Action (PoA) has been finalised. In addition, several teleconferences were held regularly with the ECDC developer officers.

Results

Main answers to the questions are detailed and developed in the upcoming dedicated section (page 8)

With regards to details related to the questions and types of answers proposed, please refer to the annex 1.

During the forty days that the questionnaire was put online in the secure EpiSouth platform:

- 22 persons out of 54 potential (40%) responders have answered the questionnaire.
- 7 of the 22 responders (32%) are from non –EU countries.

Although the rate of responder were below 50% we do think that it is worthwhile to analyse this questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaire shows a common understanding of the perceived importance posed by emerging health threats and the importance of having a tailored and adapted tool for information sharing in the fields of early warning.

Globally, regarding the main objective of easing the participation of EpiSouth focal points in posting alerts, the propositions made by countries were:

- to get commitment and authorisation from higher levels (MOH, director of NPI) and communicable disease departments
- to have at least 1 focal point at a decision making position,
- to get a commitment from the focal points to post alerts,
- to increase the number of focal points,
- to create an official and written EpiSouth procedure (shared at a high level positions in the MoH),
- to publish proceeding with an update of alerts posted (every 3 months),
- to continue soliciting countries when information is perceived as relevant for EpiSouth
- to simplify the alerts platform; ease the posting procedure, reduce information on each page.

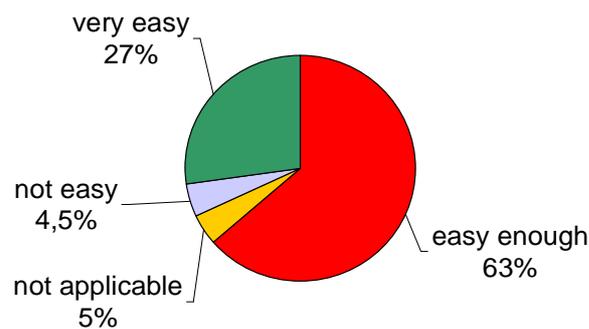
Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all the participants who have filled in the questionnaires and the others who have enriched the evaluation with their comments and observation and, in particular, the great contribution of the WP6 steering team members.

A. Consultation of alerts

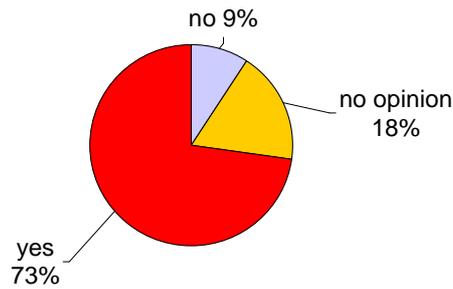
1. **95% of the respondents consider that the access to the secure platform is easy** (password).
The one who considered access was not easy mentioned that the password rules were too strict; therefore the password was not easy to remember.
2. **65% of the respondents think it is easy enough to sort, search an alert**, and 27% think it is very easy.
For the 4,5% who thought it was not easy to search/sort an alert, they suggested to add a “search” option so as to easily find the alert of interest, adding that there were a list of many options in selecting an alert.

Search/sort an alert on the platform



3. **73% think there are enough alerts/posting on the platform.**
Though, some mentioned the necessity to encourage countries in posting alerts, and to think through an EpiSouth viewpoint when deciding about posting or not posting an alert, and to reinforce the “culture” of cross border exchange of information.
In the same manner, it has been mentioned that the EWRS criteria/procedure could also be a source of worry for EU countries in posting alerts on the EpiSouth platform.
Last, not having a clear idea of the criteria according to which an alert has to be posted was also reported as a hindrance.

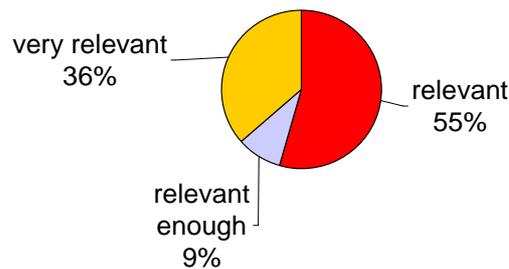
Quantity of alerts posted on the platform



4. Overall quality of the posted alerts

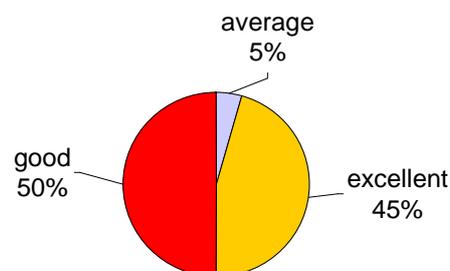
- **54,5% think that the information of the posted alerts is relevant**, and 36% think it is very relevant and some of them mentioned that information was used at work, for field visits, and provide an always updated situation of what is happening around.

Relevance of information



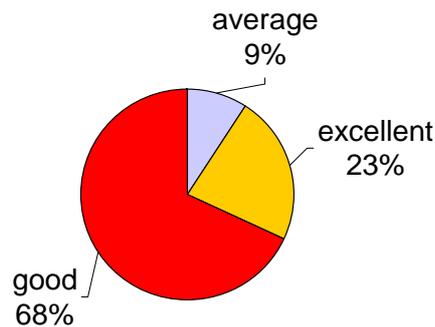
- **50% think that the content/data provided in the alert are of good quality**, 45,5% think it is of excellent quality. One person mentioned that it could be useful to provide some guidelines on the response / management of some health threats.

Content/data provided in the alert



- **68% think that the quality of the analysis of the information is good**, 23% think it is excellent.

Quality of the analysis of the information

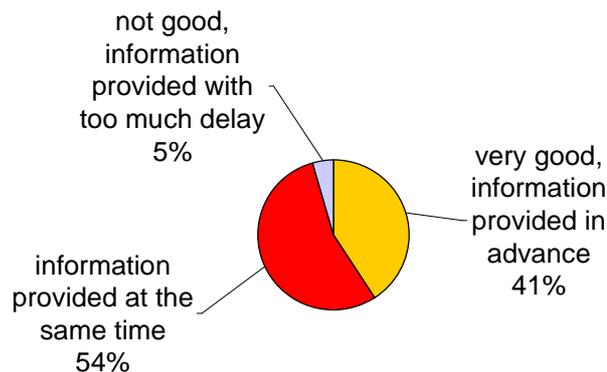


- **54% think that the information is usually provided at the same time as other similar sources of information.**

41% think the timeliness is very good, the information is usually provided in advance compared to other similar sources of information.

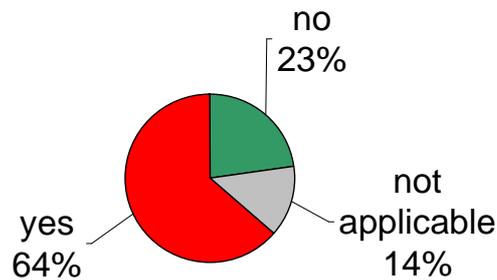
5% think timeliness is not good, the information is provided with too much delay.

Timeliness of the information



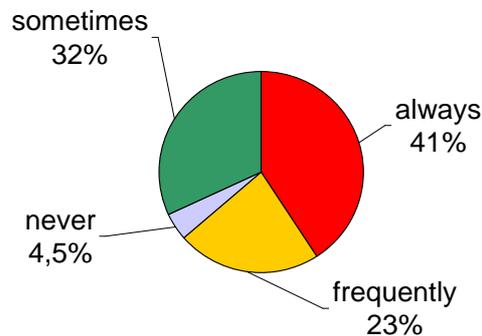
5. **64% of the respondents usually transfer the information to key stakeholders** (such as Ministry of health, Public Health institutes, and colleagues of their department, chiefs of other departments, partners, doctors, IHR and EWRS focal points ...). 23% don't transfer the information.

Transfer of information



6. **82% think that, on average, the posted alerts were useful for their institution or country** (main cited examples: H1N1, H5N1, foodborne disease, West Nile).
7. **41% always consult the alert**, 23% do it frequently, and 32% consult sometimes the alerts.

Consultation of alerts

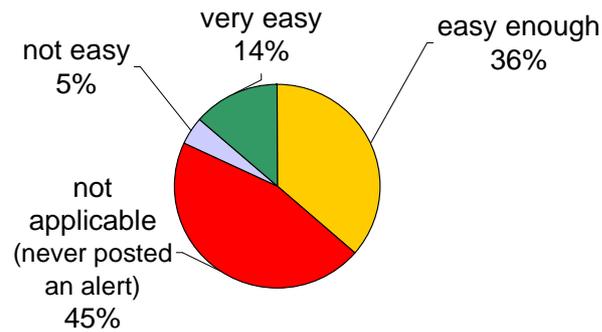


8. **For 77% of the respondents, they usually use only the email to consult the alert** (due to problems of connection to the secure area, or because it is easier and/or faster), and for 23%, they use both the email and the secured area (one mentioned that the summary in the email was not readable enough).

B. Posting of alerts

9. **45% have never posted an alert**. 36% think it is easy enough to post an alert, and 12% think it is very easy.

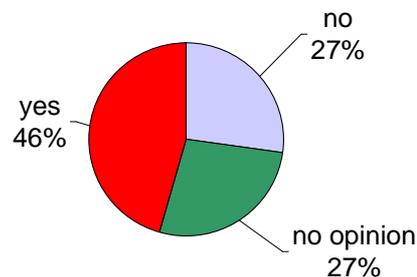
Easy to post an alert?



One respondent mentioned that it was not easy to post an alert the first time; another one reported sharing information through email. Last, one mentioned that internal bureaucratic reasons could also hinder the posting of alerts.

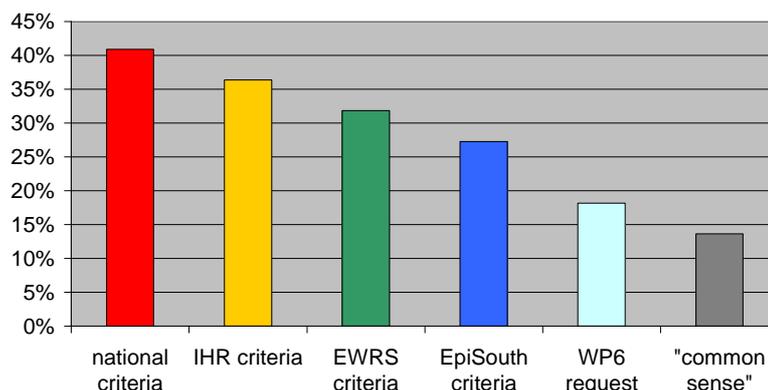
10. **46% of the respondents have a direct access to their national alerts and are able to post them** while 27% have not. The remaining respondents (27%) had no opinion on the question. Most of the respondents who answered *no* to the question specified that **they do have access but are not (always) allowed posting alerts**.

Direct access to national alerts



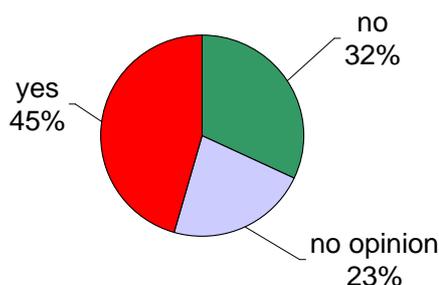
11. To post an alert, the respondents declared using (several answers were available): the **national criteria by 41%** of the respondents, IHR criteria by 36%, EWRS criteria by 32%, and EpiSouth criteria by 18% and “common sense” by 14%.

Criteria used to post an alert



12. **45% said they would need an EpiSouth criteria procedure** or a formal EpiSouth manual to help in posting alerts, against 32% who would not need.

Need of EpiSouth criteria / procedure?



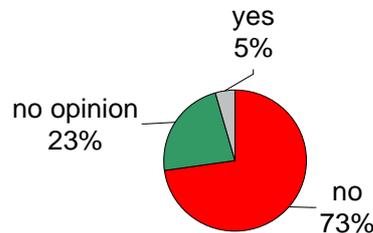
13. Reasons for not posting an alert:

In general, the reasons for not posting an alert are the following:

Reasons for not posting an alert that would be considered relevant for EpiSouth	n	%
The event is not considered as an alert by the authorities	7	32%
I don't have the green light / authorisation from the authorities (confidential issues, or other) to disseminate the information	6	27%
Someone else already posted the alert on EpiSouth platform	5	23%
My institution or myself does not have the information directly	4	18%
The alert was already posted on other mandatory platform and it was time consuming to post it a second time	4	18%
The alert was already posted on other mandatory platform and I thought it was not useful to post it a second time	4	18%
I did not perceive it as relevant at first, and then it was too late	4	18%
Due to political constraints	2	9%
I didn't think about it	1	4,5%
I did not have time		0,0%
It is technically too complicated to post an alert		0,0%
other reasons:		0,0%

14. **73% of the respondents don't have the feeling that they are posting many alerts** (but also because it is not often required).

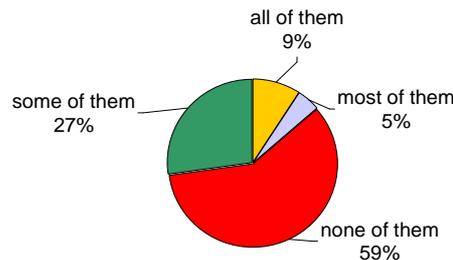
Do you have the feeling of posting many alerts?



15. **59% of the respondents said that they have posted none of the alerts occurring in their country and that could be of interest for EpiSouth.**

27% said they have posted some of them, 9% said they have post all of them and 4,5% said they have posted most of them.

Posting of alerts by countries, that could be of interest for EpiSouth



16. **54,5% of the respondents never used the platform guideline**, mainly due to the fact that they haven't posted any alert (for almost half of them). 27% of the respondents use it sometimes; and 18% used it only the first time they have posted an alert.

17. Several **propositions have been made to try to ease the participation** of focal points in the posting of alerts:

- Getting an authorisation to post alerts from superiors and the support from PH institutes, MoH, politics
- having at least one focal point who should be at a decision making position, commitment from focal points in posting alerts,
- 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),
- simplify the alerts platform, ease the posting procedure, having less information on each page.

18. The kind of options or functionalities they would like to add:

Options or functionalities to add	n	%
automatic mapping of the cases	16	73%
add a title for each posted alert in the alert platform (with the name of the event, location, date etc...)	11	50,0%
possibility to select specific countries/ areas/ organisations for sharing the alerts	11	50,0%
improve the information in the email notification (title, place, date, level of alert, etc..)	10	45,5%
forum/chat attached to each alert posted in order to further discuss the alert	8	36%
Reports exported in Excel/PDF format	6	27%
Export the data in Excel format	5	23%
help button	5	23%
changes of the design and ergonomics of the platform, please write your suggestions:	0	0,0%

19. Concerning the layout and colours of the platform, **82% of the respondents think that the layout of the platform is very good** and that there is no need to change anything and **68% think the same thing regarding the colour of the platform.**

APPENDIX I: THE WP6 steering team

Names	Country
Amel Boughoufalah; Djohar Hannoun	Algeria
Naser Ramadani; Ariana Kavaleshi	Kosovo
Fatima Aït-Belghiti; Coralie Giese and Philippe Barboza	France
Emilia Anis; Michal Bromberg;	Israel
Raja Haddadin; Sultan Abdallah	Jordan
Jackie Maistre Mellilo; Tanya Mellilo; Charmaine Gauci;	Malta
Dragan Lausevic; Zoran Vratnica	Montenegro
Ahmed Rguig	Morocco
Basem Al-Rimawi; Bassam Saeed Madi; Wesam Sbehat	Palestine
Aurora Stanescu; Adriana Pistol; Florin Popovic	Romania
Mondher Bejaoui; Mohamed Ghorbal	Tunisia
Aysegul Gosalan; Vedat Buyurgan	Turkey
Alex Leventhal; Sari Hussein; Ramlawi Asad	MECIDS

APPENDIX II: list of country providing answers to the secure platform questionnaire

Country	Institution
Cyprus	Ministry of Health – Medical and public health services
France	Institut de Veille Sanitaire (InVS)
Greece	Hellenic centre for disease control and prevention
Italy	Ministry of health – Directorate general of health prevention
Israel	Ministry of health – Israel Center for disease control
Jordan	Ministry of health – Disease control directorate
Kosovo UNSCR 1244	National Institute for Public Health
Malta	Ministry of health - Department of public health
Montenegro	Institute of Public Health
Palestine	Ministry of Health – Primary health care Safet district
Romania	Institute of Public Health
Serbia	Institute of Public Health
Tunisia	Ministry of health – Epidemiology and CDC division
Turkey	Refik Saydam National Hygiene Center



**EpiSouth PLUS: “Cross-border Epidemic Intelligence”
“WP6 – Secure EpiSouth platform Questionnaire**

Dear Colleague,

It has been now 2 years that the secure EpiSouth platform for cross-border alerts have been created respectively, by the EpiSouth WP6 team.

This questionnaire has two main objectives:

- EpiSouth Plus: As we are starting a second phase of the EpiSouth project, we think necessary and useful to collect your opinion through this questionnaire on the alert secure platform in order to consolidate this tool developed during the phase 1, and to improve its quality.

-EpiSouth-EPIS platform: The assessment of the platform quality also aims at including some modification and improvements in the development of an EpiSouth-EPIS platform, a new platform that should ease the interoperability between the different EW systems. The development of this new EpiSouth-EPIS platform is currently on process, therefore this questionnaire will be an opportunity for all EpiSouth members to contribute to the development of the future platform by sharing your ideas and feedbacks, so as to better fit with your expectations.

This is why it is really important to get most of your thoughts and critics on this platform: in this respect, please do not hesitate to share your ideas in the "comments" or "suggestions" spaces.

Following its final development and after a trial period during which all countries will be able to familiarise with this new EpiSouth-EPIS platform, the officialisation/go live of this platform will be submitted to your approval during the Paris annual meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any further information or detail:
Direct contact: Coralie GIESE; c.giese@invs.sante.fr

Thank you very much in advance for the time you will spend in answering this questionnaire.

Country

Name of reporter

Position

Institution \ Department

Date completed

QUESTIONNAIRE EPISOUTH

It has been now 2 years that the secure EpiSouth platform for cross-border alerts have been created respectively, by the EpiSouth VME team.

This questionnaire has two main objectives:

- EpiSouth Plus: As we are starting a *second phase* of the EpiSouth project, we think necessary and useful to collect your opinion through this questionnaire on the alert secure platform in order to consolidate this tool developed during the phase 1, and to improve its quality.

- Epi South-EPIS platform: The assessment of the platform quality also aims at including some modification and improvements in the development of an EpiSouth-EPIS platform, a new platform that should ease the interoperability between the different EVV systems. The development of this new EpiSouth-EPIS platform is currently on process, therefore this questionnaire will be an opportunity for all EpiSouth members to contribute to the development of the future platform by sharing your ideas and feedbacks, so as to better fit with your expectations.

This is why it is really important to get most of your thoughts and critics on this platform; in this respect, please do not hesitate to share your ideas in the "comments" or "suggestions" spaces.

Following its final development and after a trial period during which all countries will be able to familiarise with this new Epi South-EPIS platform, the officialisation/go live of this platform will be submitted to your approval during the Paris annual meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any further information or detail:

Direct contact: Coralle GIE SE ; c.gleese@invs.sante.fr

Thank you very much in advance for the time you will spend in answering this questionnaire.

COUNTRY:.....

DATE:...../...../.....

NAME:.....

Questions on EpiSouth Platform for cross-border alerts

CONSULTATION OF ALERTS

<p>1 Do you consider that the access to the secure platform is easy (password)? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes no, please explain why no opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>2 Is it easy to sort/search an alert on the platform (1 answer)</p> <p>very easy easy enough not easy, please explain why / how to improve it? Comments and suggestions:</p>	
<p>3 Do you think there are enough alerts/ postings on the platform? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes no, please specify no opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>4 What do you think about the overall quality of the posted alerts?</p> <p>- relevance of the information for EpiSouth (1 answer)</p> <p>very relevant relevant relevant enough little relevant irrelevant, give an example.</p> <p>- quality of the content / data provided in the alert (1 answer)</p> <p>excellent good average poor, give an example very poor, give an example</p> <p>- analysis of the information (1 answer)</p> <p>excellent good average poor, give an example very poor, give an example</p> <p>- timeliness of the information (1 answer)</p> <p>very good, the information is usually provide in advance compared to other similar sources of information the information is usually provided at the same time as other similar sources of information not good, the information is usually provided with too much delay, give an example</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>5 Are you usually transferring the information you received through the platform to the key stakeholders? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes, please specify to who no, please explain why not applicable</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>

<p>6 On average, were the posted alerts useful for your institution / country? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes, please give an example</p> <p>yes</p> <p>no</p> <p>no opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>7 Do you consult each posted alert? (1 answer)</p> <p>always</p> <p>frequently</p> <p>sometimes</p> <p>seldom, please explain why</p> <p>never, please explain why</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>8 Usually, do you consult the alerts through the email sent for the alert or through the secured area? (1 answer)</p> <p>I usually use the email</p> <p>I usually go to the secured area</p> <p>I do both of them</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>POSTING OF ALERTS</p>	
<p>9 Is it easy to post an alert? (1 answer)</p> <p>very easy</p> <p>easy enough</p> <p>not easy, please explain why</p> <p>Not applicable (I have never posted an alert)</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>10 Do you have direct access to your national alerts, and are you able to post them? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes</p> <p>no, please explain why</p> <p>no opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>11 In general, which criteria do you refer to to post an alert on the EpiSouth platform? (1 answer or more)</p> <p>common sense</p> <p>national criteria</p> <p>EpiRS criteria</p> <p>IHR criteria</p> <p>EpiSouth criteria</p> <p>WPE request</p> <p>others</p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>12 Do you need a EpiSouth criteria procedure or a formal EpiSouth manual to help you? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes</p> <p>no</p> <p>No opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>13 In general, what is/are the reason(s) for not posting an alert that you would consider relevant for EpiSouth? (1 answer or more)</p> <p>My institution or myself does not have the information directly</p> <p>I don't have the green light / authorization from the authorities (confidential issues, or other) to disseminate the information</p> <p>The event is not considered as an alert by the authorities</p> <p>Due to political constraints</p> <p>Someone else already posted the alert on EpiSouth platform</p> <p>The alert was already posted on other mandatory platform and it was time consuming to post it a second time</p> <p>The alert was already posted on other mandatory platform and I thought it was not useful to post it a second time</p> <p>I did not perceive it as relevant at first, and then it was too late</p> <p>I did not have time</p> <p>I didn't think about it</p> <p>It is technically too complicated to post an alert</p> <p>other reasons:</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions:</p>
<p>14 Do you have the feeling that you are posting many alerts? (1 answer)</p> <p>yes</p> <p>no</p> <p>No opinion</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>

<p>15 How many of the alerts occurring in your country, and which could be of interest for EpiSouth network, have you posted on the platform since you have had access to it? (1 answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All of them (100%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Most of them (75%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Half of them (50%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some of them (25%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of them (0%)</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>16 Did you use the user guide for the platform? (1 answer)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> always (100%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> frequently (75%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> sometimes (50%)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> seldom (25%), please explain why</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> only the first time I posted an alert</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> never, please explain why (0%)</p> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>17 What could be done to encourage alert posting / information sharing (technically, administratively, politically, strategically...) suggestions:</p>	
<p>OTHERS</p>	
<p>18 What kind of options or functionalities would you like to add? (tick the selected options)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> forum/chat attached to each alert posted in order to further discuss the alert.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> possibility to select specific countries / areas / organisations for sharing the alerts</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> changes of the design and ergonomics of the platform, please write your suggestions:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> add a title for each posted alert in the alert platform (with the name of the event, location, date, etc...)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> improve the information in the email notification (title, place, date, level) of help button</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Export the data in Excel format</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reports exported in Excel/PDF format</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> automatic mapping of the cases</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>19 What do you think about the layout and colors of the platform?</p> <p>- layout:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very good, no need to change</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> we need to change few things, please suggest</p> <p>- colors:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very good, no need to change</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> we need to change few things, please suggest</p>	<p>Comments and suggestions</p>
<p>20 Other comments and suggestions</p>	