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Project Progress Summary

Section 1: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION		NOT CONFIDENTIAL
Title of the project: Surveillance of vaccine preventable hepatitis		
Acronym of the project: hepnet (Eurohep.net)		
Type of contract : Concerted Action (Pluripartenaire)		Total project cost (in euro) 599569 €
Contract number: QLK2-CT-2002-01579	Duration (in months) 36 Months	EU contribution (in euro) 599569 €
Commencement date: 1 September 2002		Period covered by the progress report: 1 September 2002 – 31 August 2003
<u>PROJECT COORDINATOR</u>		
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Key words: viral hepatitis, vaccine preventable, surveillance, feasibility		
World wide web address: www.eurohep.net		
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Section 2: Project Progress Report

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Objectives:

The EUROHEP.NET project addresses issues related to surveillance and prevention of hepatitis A and B in the EU countries, Associated States and Israel (28 countries) with a view to study the feasibility of a future network on surveillance and prevention and to speed up the progress of these countries towards control of hepatitis A and B.

EUROHEP.NET targets 28 countries including the 15 countries of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and UK), the 12 Associated States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and Israel.

The overall aim of this concerted action is to take stock, co-ordinate, strengthen and standardise the country-specific surveillance and prevention activity of viral hepatitis A and B. This will be achieved by establishing a feasibility study of a future network on surveillance of hepatitis A and B in the 28 participating countries, integrating the expert epidemiology and public health groups involved in the surveillance of infectious diseases in the respective countries.

Results and Milestones:

During the first 12 months following results and milestones have been achieved:

- a kick-off meeting was organized 23-24 September 2002, Antwerp, Belgium. Detailed actions were agreed upon, a first draft of the country questionnaires on hepatitis A and B surveillance was discussed. The objectives and goals were exchanged with the invited representatives from different institutes involved in related projects:
 - Network on prevention and control of Communicable diseases at Community Level Buchow Hartmut, European Commission, Luxembourg
 - Basic Surveillance Network and Surveillance of hepatitis A, Andersson Yvonne, Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control (SMI), Sweden
 - European Sero-Epidemiology network ESEN 2 , Nardone Anthony, Public Health Laboratory Service, United Kingdom
 - A Surveillance Community Network for Vaccine-preventable Infectious Diseases, EUVAC.NET Muscat Mark, Statens Serum Institut, Denmark
- Eurohep.net was represented at the SMI Consultative meeting on Surveillance of Hepatitis A in Sweden Stockholm, 24-25 October, 2002,
- all National Institutes were informed about the project and were offered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); 20 countries/institutes responded positive on the request to collaborate
- a web site for the EUROHEP.NET project was created www.eurohep.net . The web site has served in this first period mainly as managerial tool. A restricted area for the contractors and the institutes was useful to share the meeting reports, presentations and some relevant publications. Each country/institute had access to his online country questionnaire, which facilitated the data gathering. The partners forum was actively used to communicate about the progress of the project and to arrange meetings. The web site was online November 2002. The country questionnaires were online in December 2002.
- a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the World Health Organization/ regional office Europe;

- from Dec 2002 until Sep 2003, 20 countries completed the questionnaires. All partners checked the replies of the Institutes and the countries were asked in a second round to provide further explanation and/or additional or missing information as required.
- 24-25 April 2003, a first progress meeting was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, where the content, objectives and expected outcome of all the work packages were discussed, the structure of the database was explained and the functionality of the website was reviewed.

Benefits and Beneficiaries:

During this first period, mainly focused on identifying the contacts within the institutes, data collection and data analysis, the impact is relatively limited;

- the involved country representatives have collected and reported all national available data on surveillance of viral hepatitis A and B as well as on the prevention measures
- the planned uniform presentation of the available results will allow the countries, as well as EC and other interested parties, to easily take stock of the current situation and to compare different countries.
- the collection of the data in the different countries was a good challenge towards the feasibility of this project and the feasibility of a future network for surveillance of vaccine preventable viral hepatitis.

Future Actions:

The next steps are:

- A uniform presentation and publication of all the available data, in collaboration and consultation with the countries/institutes
- to formulate draft guidelines regarding uniform surveillance and uniform measurement and reporting of the epidemiology,
- to formulate draft guidelines regarding uniform measurement of the disease burden,
- to formulate draft guidelines regarding uniform measurement and reporting of the vaccination effectiveness
- to formulate recommendations towards the adaptation or simplification of hepatitis B vaccination programs
- to elaborate recommendations for hepatitis A preventive programs.
- to request the designated contact persons of the national institutes to review the draft recommendations and guidelines, to check if they are in line with their national policy and to report on the obstacles to implement them.
- to challenge the draft guidelines with other stakeholders (DG Sanco, WHO/EURO, ESENII, VHPB, European CDC, and possibly others)
- based on the feedback of the different stakeholders, to optimize the guidelines and recommendations
- to report on the feasibility of an European network for surveillance of vaccine preventable viral hepatitis.
- further invest in constructive collaboration with the other related EU projects
- to present and discuss all the results at a specific meeting early 2005, where active participation of the identified stakeholders and the representatives from the participating countries/institutes is anticipated.