

1ST HIV/AIDS SURVEILLANCE EXPERTS MEETING

EU COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO COMBAT HIV/AIDS

24 November 2004

REPORT

Venue: *JEAN MONNET Building, Luxembourg, Room: JMO C5/134*

Chair: Boguslaw Suski, SANCO C3

Participants: the list of participants attached

Realising the plan for "Coordinated and Integrated Approach to Combat HIV/AIDS within the EU and in its Neighbourhood", concerning the task related to: "review the existing HIV/AIDS surveillance and a need to develop it towards more comprehensive surveillance, including data on behaviour and social issues", on 24 November a consultative meeting took place in Luxembourg.

10 external experts representing WHO-Euro, UNAIDS, EUROSTAT, EMCDDA, EU networks like EuroHIV, EuroTB, ESSTI, 3 national experts and SANCO officials attended the meeting.

The goal of the consultation was to review the main existing HIV/AIDS related surveillance systems in Europe, to identify the gaps and to propose the actions for relevant improvement and development with special reference to behaviour and social issues. The additional goal was to consider the desirability and added value of binding Community measures on national HIV/AIDS surveillance methods and reporting.

The meeting was opened by Matti Rajala, who welcomed the guests, explained the general view on the realisation of the new EU approach to combat HIV/AIDS. The information on the available sources of funds has been provided, which are Public Health Programme, The Seventh Framework Programme on Research and Structural Funds from the Regional Programme. The EU and Commission's political and organisational actions in the field have been presented.

Representatives of the particular institutions and networks presented their surveillance systems with some proposals of development for further discussion.

There were presentations from: Euro HIV, EuroTB, EMCDDA, EUROSTAT, WHO, UNAIDS, ESSTI.

The list of 18 actions has been inventoried and some of them have been discussed.

The group agreed that a broad approach to HIV/AIDS surveillance, following principles of the second generation surveillance as developed by UNAIDS/WHO, is desirable, and that further work on definition and implementation is needed specifically for the EU region. Elements of second generation surveillance have been already implemented in some Member States but data quality and availability can still be much improved. Because of the lack of comprehensive information in this matter the inventory of the existing databases should be done. In the group's opinion EU should set and implement the minimum requirements for HIV surveillance, including behavioural and socio-economical data. The choice of the data will be the matter of further analysis and agreement.

HIV surveillance should be implemented in an integrated manner with surveillance for TB (an AIDS indicator disease) and for STI (an indicator of sexual risk for HIV) and it was proposed to include hepatitis C surveillance as an indicator for injecting risk. The value of HIV prevalence data from sentinel surveillance was recognised, although the issue of funding for these studies was not resolved. Compilation of HIV prevalence data in specific risk groups and regular dissemination should be further developed and supported. The linkage, consolidation of the systems and integrated analysis should be done at the national level and it was proposed to strengthen this process by bringing together the relevant experts and institutions into a national expert group or national coordination structure.

The way how to cover the gaps in the current EuroHIV data basis related to the missing data from some Member States has been discussed. More accurate presentation of the epidemics can be achieved with particular benefits for planning process, if the existing HIV/AIDS reporting system, currently based on national data, would be able to provide regional breakdowns.

Recognising the value of HIV/AIDS estimates as regularly published by UNAIDS/WHO, the participants discussed the need for further work to improve estimates in the European region, expecting the Commission to support the action.

Among other actions following have been proposed:

The European Core Health Interview Survey and the European Special Health Interview Survey could be used to collect behavioural and socio-economic data. In particular, data on HIV/AIDS knowledge and on sexual behaviour could be collected in this survey.

Development of process indicators like number of tested persons, availability of tests, access to treatment, outcome of treatment, coverage of prevention such as 'needles provided to IDUs', outcome of the prevention actions.

Development of EU best practice for HIV testing (among pregnant women, prison released persons, TB patients, STI patients, agreed way of proceeding- opt out / opt in, etc).

Detecting recent infections with new test methods.

The following socio-behavioural data were listed during the meeting for further consideration in the near future:

- socio-economical situation (yearly income)
- educational level
- monitoring high risk injecting practices among IDU:
 - shared needles, syringes or other injecting equipment (ever, past month, last time)
- monitoring high risk sexual practices among populations of high risk of HIV infection, like: IDU, men who have sex with men, sex workers, migrants, prisoners.

Other problems tackled during the discussion:

The participants suggested reviewing existing databases in the Member States. The Commission should prepare the inventory of realised HIV/AIDS related surveillance.

The coordination on different levels of surveillance management should be improved.

Strengthening the capacity within the Commission and in the Member States is one of the conditions for the improvement of the surveillance systems. ECDC is also expected to play a role in capacity building and networking.

The participants agreed to further proceed with the work through e-mail. The next meeting is foreseen in the beginning of next year.

END

Next steps:

Short report to ESCON (07.12.2004) and Think Tank meeting (19.01.2005) with possible presentation of the list of proposals.

Collection of opinions on the proposed actions and work continuation by e-mail.

Second Consultative meeting in January/February 2005.

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agenda

- 09:00 Opening and introduction
- 09:10 Presentations of the existing networks with special emphasis on the
opportunities for future development of HIV/AIDS surveillance
 Euro HIV
 EuroTB
 EMCDDA
 WHO
 UNAIDS
 ESTTI
- 10:30 The list of proposed actions
 Discussion
- 12:30 lunch break
- 14:15 Discussion
- 16:30 Conclusions and further steps
- 17:00 End

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

To be circulated and signed by ALL participants in the meeting

Please also make sure that your contact details are correct

Thank you for your assistance

To be returned to the secretary: Esther Souville

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