Editorial

During the first quarter of 2006, most of the efforts of the Coordinating Structure were concentrated towards the termination of the data collection for 2004 and the production of the Annual Report. This was realised within the deadline agreed with the EC. In addition, the first clusters of MDR-TB were reported in the project on Molecular Surveillance of MDR, and these will be reported separately in the forthcoming cluster report. Work was also done to document the procedures used in the project and propose revisions to the case definition of TB in Europe.

March was mostly spent preparing for World TB Day (24th) and for the Advisory Committee Meeting (31st). Elmira Ibraim was elected as new member on the Advisory Committee, bringing its membership up to eleven.

By the end of the quarter, both the position of Programme Coordinator and Epidemiologist were filled in, and thus both the Coordinating Structure, as well as the Advisory Committee, were once more at their full capacity.
Progress Reports

Staffing & Recruitment
Following a stand-in period after the untimely death of Andrea Infuso in September 2005, Dennis Falzon was officially appointed Programme Coordinator of EuroTB from 1st January. In addition, Fatima Ait-Belghiti, who worked with EuroTB between 2003-2004, rejoined the team as epidemiologist from 31 March.

Advisory Committee Meeting, 31 March.
The Advisory Committee met on 31 March in Saint-Maurice, under the chairmanship of Jurij Šorli. A new member, Elmira Ibraim of Romania, was elected and attended for the first time. In addition, the ECDC was represented (Karoline Fernandez de la Hoz). The subjects discussed included the main topics for the Annual Meeting in Vilnius in September, changes to the TB case-definition, the Memorandum of Understanding with the ECDC, the future of European TB surveillance and publication of surveillance data.

Data validation
The data for TB cases notified in 2004 (treatment outcomes 2003), collected between June and December 2005, were validated until mid-February. The provisional tables, figures and country profiles were circulated to all countries for comments. Fourteen countries sent their comments and changes were made accordingly.

Data bases
The project databases (1 individual dataset, 6 aggregate) were updated with 2003 and 2004 data. Apart from their internal utility for analyses connected to the deliverables of the Coordinating Structure, these datasets will be distributed to the Contact Points in the course of the year.

Molecular Surveillance of MDR TB
In January, Isabelle Devaux visited the RIVM partners in the Netherlands to discuss a number of aspects of the MDR project, including the division of work and the design of the databases. The sub-contract with EuroTB was signed. The RIVM genotype website is now working and accessible to the partners. The first multi-country clusters were reported and an analysis of these first findings will be the subject of the quarterly report due out in early April.

Project Outputs

Annual Report, 2004
All countries (51, excluding Monaco) were included in the “Report on tuberculosis cases notified in 2004”, of which 31 countries supplied individual data, 23 of which with outcome data for 2003 cases. Drug resistance data were provided by 38 countries. The report was made available online in .pdf format on 28 February and a print version was produced on 30 March (750 copies). The paper version will be mailed to over 400 persons on the project mailing list in mid-April.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
The first edition of the SOPs of EuroTB were finalised at the end of January and forwarded to the EC and ECDC. The SOPs cover project coordination, management, and decision-making, case definitions, type of data to be collected, data flow, data protection, rendering data comparable and compatible, dissemination of information and reporting, and public health action. They will be updated throughout the year and a revised version produced in January 2007.

Interim Report, 2005-6
The first interim report / management plan summarising the activities, accounts and outputs for the first year of the financing period (2005) was produced and forwarded to the EC on 28 March.

Report: Advisory Committee Meeting, 31/03.
The minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting held in March were sent to the EC.
Other publications
1) In March, Eurosurveillance monthly published two EuroTB articles: “Tuberculosis outcome monitoring – is it time to update European recommendations?” and “European survey of BCG vaccination policies and surveillance in children, 2005”;

2) In the same month, on the occasion of World TB Day (24 March), Eurosurveillance weekly published a short EuroTB report on the current TB situation in Europe “European countries report over 400,000 tuberculosis cases in 2004”;

3) An article summarising the main determinants of MDR in European Union countries is being considered for publication in the International Journal of TB & Lung Disease;

Website
The website has been updated with the Annual Report 2004, most parts of which will also be available shortly in Russian. Country profiles were updated. The interactive query section was updated to 2004 data. A profile of the frequentation of the web-pages is given at the end of this letter

Collaboration with other initiatives

ECDC TB case definition
The EuroTB proposals for modifications to the current case definition for TB surveillance: the adoption of “confirmed, probable and possible” when analysing reported TB cases, the inclusion of laryngeal TB with pulmonary cases and the addition of MDR among the definitions were adopted with modifications. Discussions will continue throughout the year through the special Working Group.

WHO tutorial, Russian Federation
A tutorial on use of EpiInfo for Windows to analyse individual and aggregate TB datasets was developed with WHO Euro (in English and Russian versions) and was used by WHO to train Russian epidemiologists in Moscow in March.

Planned Activities

Three abstracts will be prepared for the UNION conference this year (deadline for submission – 15 April).

Annual Meeting
The 2006 Annual Meeting for national Contact Points will be held over 1½ days (26-27 September) in Vilnius, Lithuania. On the first day, there will be a joint EuroTB/KNCV session for low and medium-incidence countries, and the WHO NTP managers’ meeting (25-26th) will run as a parallel session with our meeting on that day. The topics for presentations and discussion will include contact tracing and outbreak management, risk groups, MDR cluster surveillance and other issues on European surveillance. Presentations based on submitted abstracts are also planned. The second Advisory Committee meeting will be held during this meeting. Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of ECDC, will officially open the meetings. A letter of invitation will be sent out to EuroTB correspondents in April.

Meetings and visits
1-9 April 2006 – National Tuberculosis Programme review, Turkey (MoH/WHO).
23-27 April 2006 – Mission to strengthen the TB and HIV surveillance system, Estonia (WHO Europe).
### Number of visits to the EuroTB Website
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