



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DG SANCO AGREEMENT

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**"Comparability and Quality
Improvement of
European Causes of Death Statistics"
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
July 2001**

SUMMARY

Background. The project "Comparability and quality improvement in European causes of death statistics in Europe" (1999-2001) has been undertaken as an initiative of the DG Sanco Health Monitoring Programme and the Eurostat Task Force on Causes of Death. Both organisations include as their primary assignment the development of useful and reliable health indicators.

Objectives. The objectives were :

- to produce a precise assessment of death certification procedures in Europe with ensuing recommendations for improvement and harmonization;
- to establish an extensive knowledge database on the 65 causes of death (Eurostat Short list), from which to develop a method of analysis to be applied to a selection of pathologies.

Materials and methods . The materials used were i) two questionnaires sent to a network of experts from 17 European countries, ii) a literature review of studies published during the past 25 years, iii) meetings and exchange of information with the experts network.

Results . The objectives have been achieved and yielded the following results:

- a detailed state of current knowledge on death certification practices in 17 European countries;
- a series of 39 recommendations on certification procedures proposed by the network of experts;
- a knowledge base of 532 articles related to the 65 causes of death (Eurostat short list);
- a method of analysis tested on four groups of pathologies (suicide and controversial cases, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases - including cancer of the lung, and breast cancer).

Conclusions . An important amount of information has been produced throughout the project implementation, from which the main issues surrounding certification practices and data quality have been drawn out.

It constitutes a useful and comprehensive base on which additional work can be performed.

The constitution of a dynamic network of experts and a solid database should be sustained and opportunities to pursue efforts in the future should be viewed as a priority. In particular, the recommendations on certification practices must be rapidly followed up.

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