5th Steering Group Meeting
WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen
October 2nd 2006,
10:00-16:00

Attendees:
Dr Helmut Brand, Institute of Public Health NRW
Ixhel Escamilla, Institute of Public Health NRW
Dr Gertrud Bureick, Institute of Public Health NRW
Caroline Hall, University of Brighton
John Davies, University of Brighton
Kieran Hickey, The Health Boards Executive
Dr Eleni Jelastopulu, University of Patras
Dr Jaroslav Volf, National Institute of Public Health
Birthe Havn, WHO-RHN (just the first hour)
Dr Bakhtuti Shengelia, WHO-Health Policy and Equity (just the first hour)

1. Welcoming
The session was opened by Dr Brand who welcomed the steering group and the participants from the World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe.

2. Presentation by Dr Brand
Dr Helmut Brand pointed out that the regions in Europe, as units of political and administrative management, are developing considerably. Due to the importance gained by the regions, a decision-making at a sub-national level, based on the regional evaluation of health programmes and interventions, is required more than ever.

It was said that central to this sub-national analysis has been a series of interregional comparative projects. These projects have been crucial through the development of health information and evaluation tools allowing health professionals and policy-makers to construct health indicators at the regional level across Europe and to identify good practice models of health management.

As examples of these studies the project “ISARE” (Indicateurs de Santé dans les Régions d’Europe) and the EUREGIO project were mentioned whose main aim is the promotion of cross-border cooperation in the health sector in the European Union.
Dr Helmut Brand pointed out that in this context the project “Benchmarking Regional Health Management (BEN)” was funded by the European Commission to develop a benchmarking analysis by comparing performances of health management strategies and health governance processes in order to identify good practice models.

The methodology of the project was explained and it was also said that the information for the benchmarking was obtained through questionnaires and interviews based on reference frameworks which were developed to identify and organize effective and feasible policies and interventions with regard to the project tracers.

Referring to the presentation by Dr Brand, Dr Bakhuti Shengelia from the WHO commented that for an adequate analysis health outcomes should also be measured. It was explained that besides the evaluation of the organisation of regional health management systems the BEN project also considers the analysis and comparison of epidemiological data of the regions.

3. Stages of the Project
The tasks planned to be completed by October were examined. The Secretariat of the project said that a large number of them have been successfully completed. However, it was also pointed out that some regions are still delayed with the delivery of the results from the in-depth interviews and also with the short questionnaire, which contain the organigrams.

The members of the Steering Group agreed to set the end of October as deadline for the delivery of information concerning the short questionnaires.

4. Analysis of In-Depth Interviews
Dr Gertrud Bureick presented a detailed analysis of the received information with regard to the in-depth interviews carried out by the regions.

It was said that, since the regions are very different in their health managements and administrative structures, the information received is particularly heterogeneous in terms of size and precision of the answers.

In order to get manageable and comparable information for an adequate evaluation of the in-depth interviews, the Secretariat proposed to carry out a very careful interpretation of the information, a proposal to which the members of Steering Group agreed.
5. **Grouping of Regions**
In order to define which variables could be used for the grouping of BEN regions, an extensive analysis was carried out. After a literature review and consideration of the influence of socio-economic factors on the effectiveness of health interventions, Ixhel Escamilla elaborated a preliminary list of variables for the grouping.

Based on the list of variables, a search for regional data was initiated at EUROSTAT, the statistical information service of the European Community which provides the European Union with statistics for the European level, allowing comparisons to be made between countries and regions.

After verifying the availability of data at EUROSTAT and confirming that not all the statistics exist at a regional level, the list was modified and reduced to ten quantitative variables and two qualitative measures. The changed list was proposed to the members of the Steering Group and they accepted it.

6. **Health Performance Indicators**
The Steering Group agreed to begin the recollection of epidemiological data for the construction of health performance indicators elaborated and proved by the members of the Group.

7. **General Matters**
Regarding the publications of the project results, it was pointed out that they could be published in accordance with the project tracers in Disease Journals and also in the European Journal of Public Health.

Due to the German Presidency of the European Union, the Secretariat proposed to hold the final conference of the project on March 5th and 6th in Düsseldorf, Germany. The proposal was accepted by the members of the Steering Group who were also asked to present papers at the convention.

It was pointed out that for the conference organization and the selection of other speakers, the target audience as well as the scope of the conference should be considered.

*Ixhel Escamilla*
This report was produced by a contractor for Health & Consumer Protection Directorate General and represents the views of the contractor or author. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and do not necessarily represent the view of the Commission or the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.