Project funded in 2003 - Strand 2: Health Threats

**EpiNorth – A framework for communicable disease surveillance, communication and training in Northern Europe, 2004-2006**

**Description**
Enhancing the capability of responding rapidly and in a co-ordinated fashion to health threats

**Area of activity**
Surveillance, communication and training in the area of communicable diseases in Northern Europe including an improvement of links with partner institutes in neighbouring parts of Russia.

**Summary**
The EpiNorth project aims to improve communicable disease control and communication in Northern Europe and across the border to Russia. Key objectives of the project are:
- EpiNorth. Publish a peer-reviewed scientific journal devoted to communicable disease epidemiology and control.
- EpiData. Publish an annual report of communicable diseases for Northern Europe.
- EpiVax. Maintain a guide to the vaccination programmes in Northern Europe.
- EpiNews. Develop a dynamic news service on the web with reports of outbreaks and trends of communicable diseases in Northern Europe.
- EpiTrain. Run a training programme in communicable disease epidemiology.
- EpiLinks. Maintain a library of web links to communicable disease epidemiology sites in Europe and Russia.

**Financing**
- **Leader organisation**
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**Associated beneficiaries**
- Swedish Institute For Infectious Disease Control – established in Sweden
- National Public Health Institute – established in Finland
- Health Protection Inspectorate – established in Estonia
- State Agency, Public Health Agency – established in Latvia
- Directorate Of Health – established in Iceland
- State Serum Institute – established in Denmark

**Starting date and duration of project**
- 01/01/2004
- 36 months

**Total cost**
- 572,393.00 €

**Subsidy from the Commission**
- 343,436.00 €
The EpiNorth web site ([www.epinorth.org](http://www.epinorth.org)) will be further developed as a main portal for communicable disease epidemiology and control in Northern Europe. It will have the following sections covering the collaborating EU/applicant/EEA countries and Russian regions:

- EpiNorth – the journal in full text, both in html and pdf formats.
- EpiData – a simple tabular presentation of annual surveillance data.
- EpiVax – a simple tabular presentation of vaccination programmes.
- Epinews – a dynamic news section.
- EpiTrain – a collection of lectures on communicable disease epidemiology in PowerPoint format.
- EpiLinks – a library of links to communicable disease epidemiology web sites in Europe and Russia.

**Reports:**

- [Final Report](#) (380 KB)

A range of administrative reports, such as the annual technical report to the Commission, an annual report to the partners, and minutes from Editors’ meetings and Editorial Board meetings.

**Background:**

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, three countries regained their independence: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. As such, they are unique among the countries applying for EU membership. Compared to the neighbouring Nordic countries, some communicable diseases are major public health problems in the three Baltic applicant countries. With the enlargement of the European Union, five EU countries (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) and Norway will have borders to Russia which also suffers severely from several communicable disease threats. The first issue of EpiNorth, a bulletin of the network for communicable disease control in Northern Europe, was published in 2000 with funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. Since then, three to four issues have been published annually, in approximately 4,000 exemplars free of charge (for more details, see the attached Annual report 2002). The funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers is no longer sufficient to cover our planned improvement of the bulletin and to include new elements as described below.

**Overall aim:**

The overall aim of the new EpiNorth project is to improve communicable disease control and communication in Northern Europe and across the border to Russia in order to reduce the spread of such diseases and thus safeguard public health in the Community.

**Specific objectives:**

- Improving knowledge and information about communicable diseases in Northern Europe, especially to improve the understanding of the communicable disease threats and challenges that face the three applicant countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, by improving and maintaining the EpiNorth web site and journal and the EpiData database (see below).
- Enhancing the capability of responding rapidly to communicable disease threats in Northern Europe, especially by strengthening collaboration, networking and rapid information exchange in Northern Europe and neighbouring parts of Russia, by running the EpiNorth project as such and the Epinews dynamic news service.
- Building capacity in rapid response to health threats by running the EpiTrain training programme in communicable disease epidemiology and field epidemiology (see below).
- Exchanging information on vaccination and immunisation strategies by building through the EpiVax database (see below).
- Strengthening solidarity and cohesion within the Community by bringing together all the Nordic EU and EEA-member-states and the three Baltic applicant countries and aiming to reduce the incidence gradient of several communicable diseases of major public health importance by transferring information, knowledge and experiences.
- Developing the relations with the Eurosurveillance journal, possibly exploring an amalgamation of the two journals in the future when the language barrier is reduced and the relevant topics to the readers are more similar.
- Laying the foundations for good relations, open information exchange and joint safeguarding of public health on the border between the Community and Russia by including Russian regional surveillance institutes in the EpiNorth project. (This will be financed by non-EC sources.)

**Methods**

The EpiNorth is a collaborative network that brings together the public health institutes in Northern Europe and maintains links with similar institutes in neighbouring parts of Russia. The project will build on the existing, successful EpiNorth network.

Key methods employed include:

- EpiNorth. Publish four issues annually and a full-text web version of a peer-reviewed bilingual (English/Russian) journal devoted to communicable disease epidemiology and control, and maintain
collaboration with Eurorveillance.

- **EpiData.** Collect the annual reports of communicable diseases from the public health institutes in Northern Europe, including parts of Russia, transmit them to the Community network for the epidemiological surveillance and control of communicable diseases (Decision 2119/98) and publish standardised key figures from these on the EpiNorth web site and write an analytical report for the annual November issue of the EpiNorth journal.

- **EpiVax.** Collect annually information on the vaccination programmes and publish these on the web.

- **EpiNews.** Develop a dynamic news service on the web and collect, transmit them to the Community network for the epidemiological surveillance and control of communicable diseases (Decision 2119/98) and publish reports of outbreaks and trends of communicable diseases in Northern Europe.

- **EpiTrain.** Run an annual two-week training course in epidemiology for key communicable disease professionals with an emphasis on field epidemiology, communication skills, antimicrobial resistance and communicable diseases of public health importance.

- **EpiLinks.** Develop a library of links to communicable disease epidemiology web sites in Europe and Russia.