European institutes for disease prevention and control collaborate to improve public health surveillance

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A new Public Health Action Programme called Triple-S (Syndromic Surveillance Survey, Assessment towards Guidelines for Europe) started in September 2010 and will end in August 2013. The aim of the Triple-S project is to increase the European capacity for real time or near real time surveillance and monitoring of the health burden of expected and unexpected health-related events. During the period mentioned, the project will review and analyse European syndromic surveillance systems for both human and animal health. The project, which is co-financed by the European Commission through the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers, involves 24 organisations from 13 countries.

Syndromic surveillance monitors in near real time the spread and impact of health-related events in a population. These events range from infectious diseases to environmental hazards and the surveillance is based on the presence of signs and symptoms. Examples of sources used are data from emergency departments, pharmacy sales, telephone helplines, web queries and data that may reveal animal production collapse.

A core activity for the project is the creation of an inventory of syndromic surveillance systems in Europe (planned, pilot, existing and expired). To this end, a network of contact persons will be created and a questionnaire will be developed and sent to this network. The information collected will be analysed and stored in a specifically designed database, which will be updated during the entire duration of the project. A review of syndromic surveillance systems in the veterinary agencies in the European Union (EU) Member States will also be conducted. A specific questionnaire for this review will be adapted from the questionnaire on human health syndromic surveillance systems. Individuals who have information related to human or animal syndromic surveillance systems in a particular country are encouraged to visit the Triple-S website and read more on possibilities to participate in the surveys.

To facilitate knowledge exchange between representatives of syndromic surveillance systems in different EU Member States, eight visits will be organised for project partners and external participants between June 2011 and May 2012. During the visits, detailed information on the syndromic surveillance systems, strengths and weaknesses, experiences and lessons learnt, and the importance of different determinants of syndromic surveillance will be discussed. Institutions interested in visiting syndromic surveillance systems for knowledge exchange can find more information on the Triple-S website.

References