

EUROCISS II

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project aims and objectives

In Europe *cardio- and cerebrovascular diseases* (CVDs) represent the leading cause of mortality, morbidity and disability. Their frequency and distribution differ largely among countries; in many Member States (MS) rates are high and on the increase, while in others levels are decreasing. A surveillance system based on the collection of comparable and valid data is essential for evaluating the burden of CVDs, their time trends and geographical distribution and for planning and implementing appropriate interventions. To improve health and determine if such programmes are performing as planned and have achieved their goals and objectives, comparable and valid data are needed.

Main objectives:

- To develop knowledge, tools and expertise among MS for CVDs surveillance and prevention;
- To complete the technical and scientific work begun during the first phase of EUROCISS project and necessary to finalize the list of indicators, the standardized procedures and methods of data collection that will assist MS in producing reliable, valid and comparable data;
- To assist in implementing recommendations for the development of population-based registers and surveys for monitoring temporal trends and geographical differences of CVDs in MS;
- To create a network of MS with expertise in chronic diseases surveillance, which will also serve to improve the coordination of other projects funded under the specific Public Health Programme framework as well as with the forthcoming specific Working Parties.

Specific objectives:

- To complete the inventory of sources of information and available data in MS and to finalize the list of recommended indicators for monitoring CVDs;
- To prepare the manual of operations for the implementation of surveillance systems for the collection and validation of indicators, in particular of population-based registers of myocardial infarction and stroke;
- To prepare the manual of operations for the implementation of CVDs surveys for collecting standardized indicators, in particular for prevalence of ischemic heart diseases, heart failure, stroke and other CVDs, and to identify a minimum set of questions and exams to be included in the health information surveys/health examination surveys (HIS/HES) for evaluating the prevalence of CVDs at European level;
- To train, at request, epidemiologic teams of MS interested in the development and improvement of surveillance systems of CVDs, with particular emphasis on the implementation of registers and methods for validating data on myocardial infarction and stroke and for conducting CVDs surveys;

To collaborate with other HMP projects on the identification of a minimum set of indicators for monitoring chronic diseases in Europe, especially cancer (EUROCISS), diabetes (EUDIP), COPD and respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal pain and functional limitations, HIS/HES and ECHI-2 projects.

Description of tasks, sequence of work and timetable

1st year

- To convene participants and appoint the Steering Committee;
- to set up a questionnaire for updating the inventory using information from member states on the sources of information, data collection methods and available indicators;
- to perform the inventory;
- to establish the project web-site;
- to complete the technical and scientific work required to produce a final list of recommended indicators;
- to meet with coordinators of other multi-annual projects dealing with chronic diseases in order to identify a common set of recommended indicators for chronic disease surveillance;
- to participate in international meetings to disseminate the list of CVDs indicators;
- to draw up the annual report.

2nd year

- To prepare a manual of operations for the implementation of population-based registers of myocardial infarction and stroke that will detail best practices for the collection and validation of recommended indicators for monitoring CVDs; these data can then be used for computing attack rates, incidence, case fatality and 1-year survival;
- to prepare the manual of operations for the collection and validation of recommended indicators for monitoring CVDs through the implementation of surveys to measure the prevalence of ischemic heart diseases, heart failure and other CVDs;
- to develop, in collaboration with other multi-annual projects dealing with chronic diseases, a minimum set of questions to be included in the HIS in order to evaluate the prevalence of CVDs in the European population;
- to identify, in collaboration with other multi-annual projects dealing with chronic diseases, a minimum set of exams to be included in the HES to evaluate the prevalence of CVDs in the population
- to participate in international meetings to disseminate the manuals of operations for the surveillance of CVDs;
- to draw up the annual report;
- to offer, at request, a course for training epidemiologic teams of countries interested in the implementation of population-based registers of myocardial infarction and stroke.

3rd year

- To offer, at request, a course for training epidemiologic teams of countries interested in validating their CVDs mortality and morbidity data;
- to undertake technical visits to the countries applying, for the implementation of registers and/or surveys
- to write scientific papers to disseminate results;
- to participate in international meetings to disseminate results;
- to draw up the final report.

Stages of project/Deliverables	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12	Month 13	Month 14	Month 15	Month 16	Month 17	Month 18	Month 19	Month 20	Month 21	Month 22	Month 23	Month 24	Month 25	Month 26	Month 27	Month 28	Month 29	Month 30	Month 31	Month 32	Month 33	Month 34	Month 35	Month 36		
Meetings of partners																																						
Meetings of Steering committee																																						
Convene the meeting of multi annual projects of chronic diseases																																						
Set up questionnaire and perform inventory																																						
Develop and maintain web-site																																						
Complete the list of indicators																																						
Prepare the manual of operations for AMI registers																																						
Prepare the manual of operations for stroke registers																																						
Prepare the manual of operations for CVDs surveys																																						
Identify the minimum set HIS/HES																																						
Draw up annual report																																						
Offer courses for training epidemiologic team																																						
Undertake technical visits to interested countries																																						
Draw up final evaluation report																																						

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Conformity with the EU Commission's predefined objectives

- The aim of the project is to create an European network within MS in order to improve information and knowledge needed for the development of the surveillance of CVDs, an essential component of any effort to promote health and prevent CVDs.
- The network will be supported by technical manuals of operations for both collection and validation of recommended indicators and at request will provide training of epidemiologic teams to implement population-based registers, CVDs surveys, data collection and validation.
- The work in collaboration with other multi-annual projects in the field of chronic disease morbidity will have a synergistic effect on further development of an adequate chronic diseases surveillance system in Europe.

Community added value

Following the MONICA experience, simplified surveillance systems have been set up in some European countries; the first phase of the EUROCISS project has shown that these simplified methods, based on record linkage of hospital discharge diagnoses and death certificates, with validation of samples of events according to standardized diagnostic criteria, form a viable alternative for those countries which do not have a register. If further surveillance systems are to be established in MS, a manual of operations to collect and validate recommended indicators using standardized definitions needs to be developed. The project, which is unique in its action, will create an European network with representation of MS and provide a forum to share and transmit experience, knowledge and information about CVDs. It will give a valid contribution to the periodic monitoring of diseases and conditions that are among the leading causes of death and disability in the Community. The Community added value is the possibility of creating a common surveillance system valid for all MS through the implementation of population-based registers in those countries where they are lacking and further improvements in those where registers already exist as well as training teams of epidemiology experts in collecting and validating data. The attained synergy and the standard methodology recommended will result in the availability in all countries of reliable, valid and therefore comparable data on CVDs morbidity at European level, and will enhance expertise, improve the targeting and quality of prevention efforts, improve quality of life of adult population and reduce public health costs.

Dissemination of results and visibility of the Community action

This project is the natural follow-up of the work started by the EUROCISS project. The relevant number of MS participating to the network and its linking and collaboration with other multi annual projects in the field of chronic diseases will facilitate the dissemination of the results as well as their use. The meetings of all partners will provide immediate dissemination of results at national and local level. The manual of operations, the results and reports will be placed on the project web-site and disseminated through the networks of the partners and their Public Health Institutes as well as through WHO. The training of the epidemiological teams and the country visits will ensure that all countries will be informed of best practices in the monitoring of CVDs.

Partners will be encouraged throughout the duration of the project to attend and participate in national and international meetings related to public health and CVDs prevention, contributing with their input to the dissemination of the project results and giving further visibility to the Community approach. The results will be submitted for publication in relevant scientific policy and professional journals.

Results likely to be taken into consideration

The number of persons and teams trained will be a ready measure of outcome, but more importantly, the number and coverage of the network of registers of myocardial infarction and stroke will be measurable. In addition, this project should have as an outcome the production of more reliable, valid and therefore comparable data for Europe, the results of which will be seen in the form of better and more complete data necessary for decision-making and monitoring trends over time. The number of indicators available from the participating countries as well as the number of countries routinely performing data validation should be increased and readily measurable. The timeliness of data will be another measurable criteria.

Relevance of the methods and quality of the proposed management

Considering that CVDs represent a major burden for public health and a significant contributor to mortality, morbidity and disability in Europe, the project proposes the development of standardized methodology for surveillance through the implementation of CVDs registers and surveys aimed at providing reliable, valid and comparable data. In order to produce validated indicators, a “conditio sine qua non” is to allow the epidemiological teams involved in the validation to have access to the relevant medical records and routine data of health statistics. Considering that the surveillance system is based on record linkage of data deriving from different sources of information, and that the validation depends on the assessment of medical records, problems may arise from new privacy rules. The project will train, at request, field teams of epidemiologists from MS to respond to the needs pointed by public health authorities. The implementation of registers to provide surveillance data will secure an invaluable tool to assess over time the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures at country level during acute events and the training of epidemiologic teams that will improve their ability to follow up patients in order to evaluate disability and quality of life of the involved population.

The project will produce adequate recommendations for CVDs surveillance based on the collection of standardized indicators which represent the prime tool for evaluating the burden of CVDs, their time trends and geographical distribution, for planning and implementing interventions to improve public health and determinants in countries, and for assessing whether prevention programmes have achieved their goals and objectives. In this way MS should be able to provide to the European health information systems (EUROSTAT, WHO, OECD) valid and comparable data on CVDs. Most of the participants of this project work at Institutes of Public Health and have documented experience in the surveillance of CVDs, having contributed to the implementation of CVDs registers and surveys in their countries. The Istituto Superiore di Sanità is the technical and scientific entity of the Italian Ministry of Health and National Health Service, also responsible of health monitoring, promotion and prevention.

Effectiveness of partnerships

The partnership to this project will allow to share experience and scientific know-how and provide the scientific and technical bases necessary for the achievement of the project. The manuals of operations will be prepared and discussed taking into account cultural differences of MS; this will be assured for the 18 countries participating to the project. The sharing of common and valid methods to collect data will avoid unnecessary efforts and cost for harmonization when countries will be asked to provide data to the European health information systems (EUROSTAT, WHO, OECD) . The network with other multi-annual projects relevant to chronic diseases will also increase the likelihood of future success in the development of a common and valid surveillance system of chronic diseases for all MS.

Consistency of the funding plan

The project will be based on the following: partners contribution, Steering Committee and Researchers of the Coordinating Center.

- Each partner will contribute attending the meetings, providing the inventory of the proper country, collaborating to the discussions regarding the list of recommended indicators and actively working to support the European partnership, sharing their experiences on monitoring CVDs.
- The Steering Committee, to which will be appointed 5 experts, will discuss and review the manuals of operations of myocardial infarction and stroke registers and of CVDs surveys according to the recommended indicators in collaboration with the Coordinating Center.
- The Coordinating Center, constituted by two full time researchers, one part time researcher and one part time senior researcher, will work closely with the Steering Committee and the coordinators of other HMP involved in the surveillance of chronic diseases. The Coordinating Center will draw up the manuals of operations of myocardial infarction and stroke registers, of CVDs surveys and the annual and final reports. A group of experts will be selected as trainers to participate in the courses of epidemiologists offered to countries interested in validating their CVDs data.