

TWINNING INTERIM QUARTERLY REPORT

No. 5

Strengthening the surveillance and control of Communicable Diseases

Member State Partners

The Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport,
The Netherlands School of Public and Occupational Health (NSPOH)

Beneficiary Country Partners

Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic

May 2006

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List of abbreviations

BC	Beneficiary Country
CC	Component Coordinator
CD	Communicable diseases
CFCU	State Agency “Central Financing & Contracting Unit”
EC	European Commission Representation in the Slovak Republic
EQAS	External Quality Assurance System
EU	European Union
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KIT BR	KIT (Dutch Royal Tropical Institute) Biomedical Research
LCI	Dutch National Co-ordination-centre for CD
Min VWS	Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health of Slovakia
MS	Member State
NRC	National Reference Centre
NSPOH	Netherlands School of Public & Occupational Health
RTA	Resident Twinning Advisor
PL	Project Leader
PM	Project Manager
PHA	Public Health Authority
QA/QC	Quality Assurance / Quality Control
RIVM	Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
RPHA	Regional Public Health Authority
SAC	Sector Aid Coordinator
SNAS	Slovak National Accreditation Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPO	Senior Programme Officer
SR	Slovak Republic
STE	Short Term Expert
SW/HW	Soft Ware / Hard Ware
WHO	World Health Organization

Section 1. Project data

Twinning Contract No.	SK03/IB/SO/01
Project title	Strengthening the surveillance and control of communicable diseases
Twinning partners	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (NL) Ministry of Health (SK)
Report No.	5
Period covered by the report	14 February 2006 – 13 May 2006
Duration of the project	21 months

Rapporteur Member State

Rapporteur Beneficiary Country

Mr Geert van Etten, project leader

Ms Zuzana Škublová, project leader

Section 2. Content

Background

Policy development

The top management of the Public Health Authority of SR was changed on 17th of February 2006. Mr. Valašek was appointed as acting director of the PHA SR and as acting Chief Hygienist. The new management was informed about the Twinning project, its aims, activities within each component and the current status of realization and implementation (See also under Issues).

The new Decree of the Government of the Slovak Republic on further details on prevention and control of communicable diseases has been approved by the legislative board of the Slovak government and still should be approved by the government itself.

Achievements of mandatory results

The following **Benchmarks** were achieved in the reporting period:

Component I

- Document containing the guidelines for outbreak management.
- As part of the training programme 74 staff from Regional PHA have participated in a two days workshop on outbreak management.
This benchmark was partly achieved because only 1 day workshop took place. The 2nd part of the workshop will take place in July.

Component II

- As part of the training programme, 4 specialists of NRCs undertook a two weeks internship in Dutch or German institutes with focus on quality control systems and one employee undertook one week training more.
- As part of the training programme, 40 employees from PHA and NRCs have participated in a two days seminar on quality control systems and progressive detection methods

Component III

- Developed Standard Operating Procedures for external quality assurance and implemented and tested through testing panels at 5 selected pilot workplaces. This benchmark is in the final stages of completion.

The following **Mandatory Result** was completed in the reporting period:

Component I

- The basic concept for the future information and reporting system, which is central to the Slovak monitoring system of communicable diseases harmonised with EU standards.
The basic concept for the future information and reporting system is a partial result of the project.

Component II

- -

Component III

- -

Activities in the reporting period

On 7 March 2006, the 4th Meeting of the Steering Committee took place at the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. See annex 1 for the minutes of this meeting for which a draft was first circulated to all members for comments which then were integrated into this new version.

On the 1st of March a regular second meeting was held between the BC project leader Mrs. Škublová, the BC project manager Mrs. Krištúfková, RTA Mrs. Aalders and RTA assistant Mrs. Ráčková at the Ministry of Health SR. Topics discussed were a.o.: Proposals for extra RTA budget, 4th Quarterly report, possible replacement of STE Mrs. Waijboer' for future missions and involvement of new STE Mr. Melchers for activities 2.5 and 2.6. A date for a next meeting has not been fixed yet. See annex 2 for the minutes of this meeting.

On the 2nd of March the second regular meeting was held between the BC project manager Mrs. Krištúfková, the coordinators for component I and II, Mrs. Bosá and Mrs. Avdičová, RTA Mrs. Aalders and RTA assistant Mrs. Ráčková at the Slovak Medical University. Mr. Nikš, coordinator for component III was absent. Topics discussed were a.o.: Proposals for RTA extra budget, possible replacement of STE Mrs. Waijboer' for future missions and an action plan. See annex 3 for the minutes of this meeting. A Separate meeting with Mr. Nikš took place on 22 February, no minutes were made but the same topics as above were discussed. The next meeting will take place on the 4th of May.

On the 6th of March a meeting was held between the BC project leader Mrs. Škublová, the CFCU Financial manager Mrs. Pavlíková, RTA Mrs. Aalders and RTA assistant Mrs. Ráčková at the CFCU. The aim of this meeting was to discuss financial matters within the project, template of financial report and other issues. See annex 4 for the minutes of this meeting.

On the 28th of March a meeting was held between the new Director of PHA SR / Chief hygienist Mr. Valašek, other representatives of PHA SR Mrs. Kafková and Mrs. Marušáková, BC project manager Mrs. Krištúfková, RTA Mrs. Aalders and RTA assistant Mrs. Ráčková at the Public Health Authority. The main reason of this meeting was the introduction of the RTA to the Chief hygienist as well as project in general. See annex 5 for the minutes of this meeting. (See also Section 2 / Issues)

On the 19th of April the Monthly Meeting on international projects at the MoH took place, chaired by Mrs. Škublová. The representatives of CFCU and Office of Government of SR were also present.

In brief, the Twinning project was discussed, next to other projects. An update was given to all the people present on the progress of the project. The progress on the proposals was also discussed.

On the 4th of May the third regular meeting was held with the BC project manager Mrs. Krištúfková and the coordinators of the different components, Mrs. Avdičová, Mrs. Bosá, Mr. Nikš, RTA Mrs. Aalders and RTA assistant Mrs. Ráčková. Topics discussed were a.o.: Update on project in general, update on the different components, update on the proposals, action plan and communication issues. See annex 6 for the minutes of this meeting.

On the 10th of May an expert-meeting took place at the office of NSPOH in the Netherlands with most of the short-term experts (STE's) involved in the PHARE Twinning project, chaired by MC project leader Mr. van Etten. Mr. Aarendonk from NSPOH was also present. Topics discussed were a.o.: an update from RTA Mrs. Aalders and Mr. van Etten on the project as a whole and the progress of the project from the point of view of the STE's.

Update on the issue of the extra proposals

Concerning the savings of the period of RTA absence, mentioned in the previous Quarterly Report, the Component Coordinators came up with a list of proposals. Eventually only 3 proposals were submitted: extension of the activities 1.10, 1.12 and 1.15 (see annex 7). These were sent to the Dutch partners who commented on them and they were then forwarded to the Slovak Project leader, Mrs. Škublová and to the CFCU. After a lot of discussions and some delay on the Slovak side, Sideletter nr. 7 (see annex 8), concerning the extension of activities 1.10 and 1.12, together with Notification of reallocations nr. 5 was produced and approved of by the Dutch and Slovak side and finally sent to the CFCU in the week of the 8th of May.

The sideletter for the extension of activity 1.15 will follow later as this activity will only take place in the 3rd week of September.

Separate sideletters for the approval of new STE's involved in activities 1.12 and 1.15 will also be send later.

Component I

Activity 1.9 Development of a technical framework, including recommendations on hardware (Technical specifications for Supply contract), software, data-format, issue of security, accessibility, access control, availability and technical management.

This activity took place in the 4th quarter. In this report an annex to the mission report of the STE Mr Otto for act. 1.9 is added (see annex 9). This annex was still missing in the last report.

Activity 1.10 Formulation of Slovak specific general guidelines for outbreak management. Specific requirements from component co-ordinator:

- *Workshop for epidemiologists (36-40 persons) of each Regional Institute of Public Health in Slovakia.*

Activity 1.11 Two days workshop on outbreak management for regional staff with exercise on case control and cohort studies.

Specific requirements from component co-ordinator:

- *One day workshop with members of working group for Monitoring infectious diseases.*
- *To explain principles creating of national guidelines for specific diseases and outbreak.*

Mrs. Aura Timen (NSPOH / RIVM, The Netherlands) was involved in this activity on behalf of the Member State-partner.

The visit took place from 13 – 17 February 2006 at the Public Health Authority of SR in Bratislava and the Regional Public Health Authority in Banská Bystrica.

Activities during the joined mission were the following:

- Formulation of Slovak guidelines (act. 1.10)

Annex 10 shows the full mission report of Mrs. Timen and included is a first example and draft of the formulation of guidelines, in this case for Hepatitis A and B.

- A workshop on outbreak management (act. 1.11)

Objectives of this workshop were the following:

Principles of outbreak investigation

- Steps in outbreak investigation

- Methodological issues
- Practical aspects
- Confirm the outbreak and the diagnosis
- Count the cases (case-definition)
- Collect information on cases
- Analyse data by time, place and people
- Develop hypothesis
- Test hypotheses (analytical studies)
- Implement specific control studies
- Communication
- Evaluate the impact of control measures

Explanatory note:

The two activities 1.10 and 1.11 were combined during this mission. Therefore Mrs. Timen wrote only one mission report for both activities.

One day was spent on an interactive workshop with about 60 participants from all National Reference Centres on a cohort study, one day was spent on the formulation of Slovak National Guidelines with the working group of Component I. Mrs. Timen assisted the working group with producing an example and draft of the formulation of some guidelines (see Annex 10).

Main conclusions of the mission according to STE:

Assess the goals of this project component on short and long term and formulate the content of the remaining activities accordingly.

Instead of concentrating so much on the software part, more attention should also be paid to the epidemiological part of component I.

Because there was not enough time during this mission to deal with all subjects, the component coordinator put forward a proposal to extend activity 1.10, one of the three extra proposals sent to the CFCU for approval, in order to streamline these Slovak guidelines with the Dutch National guidelines by translating part of the latter into the Slovak language.

In this way an increase of the level of epidemiological action and its harmonization with EU standards can be expected (see annex 7 - Extra proposals).

As Mrs. Timen came for 4 days instead of the planned 6 days for these two activities in total, there are still 2 days left from the joined mission for the activities 1.10 and 1.11. It was agreed that Mrs. Timen would come back to give a 1-day workshop on case control as part of activity 1.11, either in May or June. As is now clear, Mrs. Timen will not have time available to finalize this mission, another Dutch STE will do this: Mrs. Willy-Anne van Stiphout. Although the workshop was split in two separate training days the objective of the activity remains the same. The sideletter for the approval of the new expert will appear in the 6th Quarterly Report.

With the finalization of the original activity 1.10 The Second Phase (development) of Component I is now completed.

Activity 1.12 Registration for new memberships of EU networks

This activity is delayed. The RTA will soon discuss and update with the CC and PM the list of EU memberships already made available as part of act. 1.5. Possibilities for new memberships will be looked at as well.

Next to this, this activity is put forward as an extra proposal: a 1 day workshop on the use of ENTERNET, a network specialized in communicable diseases by a Dutch expert (sideletter 5th Quarterly report

will follow as soon as possible), which will take place in June (see annex 7 - Extra proposals).

Update on SOFTEC

The work with the company SOFTEC continues on a daily basis and according to agreed time schedule stated in the contract.

Development of EPIS software and activities with SOFTEC from January to April:

- Analysis of the communicable diseases register, influenza reporting and Early Warning System - processing of source documents and requirements of security system - commenting procedures.
- Processing of proposals for solution of individual subsystems – commenting procedure - incorporation of comments – final solution and its acceptance.
- Specification of individual EPIS items; its position at screens – processing of subitems and data dictionaries for individual items in the following order:
 - I. Sorting out of infections by individual groups: alimentary, respiratory, sexual, blood transmittable, skin and mucosal infections, vaccination preventable infections, zoonosis and natural focal infections.
 - II. Etiological agents by diagnosis.
 - III. Source of infection.
 - IV. Mechanism of transmission.
 - V. Factor of transmission.
 - VI. Risk factors.
 - VII. Diagnostic tests.
 - VIII. Antibiotic resistance.
 - IX. Types of materials.
 - X. Types of vaccines.
 - XI. Types of injuries, animals and other epidemiological characteristics while rabies danger.
- Preparing of source documents for automatic link of reporting to European networks, BSN, ENTERNET, POLIO ...etc.
- Proposal of the portal for website and its content preparation.

Component II

Activity 2.3

As part of the training programme within activity 2.3, NSPOH together with RTA office prepared an internship of Mrs. Adamčáková, Virologist at NRC for Salmonellosis at PHA SR. The internship took place from 2–15 April 2006 at Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam, Virology department.

During Mrs. Adamčáková's 14-days internship she visited all units (molecular diagnostic, serology diagnostic, cell cultures) of Department of Virology in Erasmus Medical Centre and Influenza Research part. The aim of the internship was to study the laboratory practice for detection of respiratory viruses (including influenza viruses); compare methods used in these laboratories with methods used in NIC (National Influenza Centre) of Slovak Republic and discuss problems with sensitivity of molecular operating procedures.

Overall Mrs. Adamčáková is satisfied with her internship. Participation of the study visit enabled her to get an overview about realization of detection methods of pathogens that cause respiratory infections. Very valuable was the possibility to compare these methods, equipment and facilities of visited laboratories with NIC of Slovak Republic as well as getting knowledge on molecular diagnostic methods and immuno fluorescence assay. Very valuable are required professional contacts. NIC of Slovak Republic is very thankful for panel of posi-

tive controls of respiratory viruses and reagents (primers/probes) for real time PCR. There is a possibility of introducing real time PCR in daily routine in NIC of Slovak Republic.

The fact that the staff in Rotterdam did not have any prior information about her issues of interest and thus were not prepared properly for her visit was not very good however. Fortunately they were very flexible and managed to make an interesting programme for her. Also the fact that all the time Mrs. Adamčáková was asked to come during the influenza season, although this was not the most convenient time for her, was a bit confusing as well to everyone concerned. The staff in Rotterdam also said that it would have been better for her to have come outside the influenza season because they would have had more time for her. This matter is still under investigation between NSPOH and the laboratory in Rotterdam.

See the following annexes for detailed information:

Annex 11 – Programme Study visit Mrs. Adamčáková

Annex 12 - Mission report Study visit Mrs. Adamčáková

Activity 2.5 Training of staff of 9 selected NRC's in quality control systems and progressive detection methods

Three short-term experts were involved in this activity on behalf of the Member State-partner: Mr. Galama, Mr. Melchers and Mrs. de Schipper-Visser.

The visit of the first expert Mr. Joachim M.D. Galama (NSPOH / University Medical Centre St Radboud, The Netherlands) took place from 26 February –1 March 2006 at the Public Health Authority of SR in Bratislava.

As part of the training programme, Mr. Galama gave a presentation at the so-called “Consultation Day” at which approximately a 100 people from all PHA's in the Slovak Republic were present. Mr Galama took part in the discussion and also participated in the rest of the day.

At the request of the component coordinator Mr. Galama also concentrated on the following:

- Experts from the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic who have been involved in activity 2.3 will inform the expert about the new selected methods which allow rapid laboratory detection of infectious agent and they will discuss about the condition of their implementation.
- Laboratory diagnosis of measles, rubella and parotitis.
- Isolation and propagation of viruses on cell cultures (Vero-Slam culture, rabbit kidney).
- Detection and identification of isolates by immunofluorescence test and Plaq-neutralisation test.
- Isolation of viral RNA from clinical samples (throat swab, urine, oral fluid).
- Detection of Mycoplasma contaminants in cell cultures (PCR).

Specific expected results from component co-ordinator:

- Expected results will be confirmation of appropriateness of selected method and standard operating procedures.

Main conclusions of the mission according to STE:

Overall progress in methodology and activities since April 2005 (1st visit, act. 2.2)

Mr. Galama's full mission report can be found in annex 13.

The visit of the second expert Mr. Willem J.G. Melchers (NSPOH / University Medical Centre St Radboud, The Netherlands) took place from 23 – 26 April 2006 at the Public Health Au-

thority of SR in Bratislava. Mr. Melchers replaced Mr. van Soelingen for the activities 2.5 and 2.6. Side letter No. 5 can be found in annex 14.

This activity is connected to activity 2.2 described in the workplan in the following way: As part of the evaluation progressive detection methods of NRC staff and analysis of available equipment at the different NRC.

As part of the training programme, around 36 employees from Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic and National Reference Centres have participated in a one day seminar on progressive detection methods.

At the request of the component coordinator Mr. Melchers also concentrated on the following:

- Experts from the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic who have been involved in activity 2.3 will inform the expert about the new selected methods which allow rapid laboratory detection of infectious agent and they will discuss about the condition of their implementation. Expected result will be confirmation of convenience of selected method.
- Assistance in the process of the laboratory diagnostics of infectious agents:
 - Pulsed Fields Gel Electrophoresis methods,
 - To consult diagnostic options using methods of molecular epidemiology (genotyping, sequencing and determination of presence / absence of genes, plasmid profile determination),
 - Possibilities of rapid diagnostic: Real Time PCR, multiplex PCR, PCR,
 - Virulence factors determinationin case of salmonellas, meningococci and pneumococci.

Main conclusions of the mission according to STE:

The Staff is very motivated and willing to incorporate new technologies.

Mr. Melcher's full mission report can be found in annex 15.

The visit of the third expert Mrs. De Schipper (NSPOH / University Medical Centre Leiden, The Netherlands) took place from 23 – 26 April 2006 at the Public Health Authority of SR in Bratislava. Mrs. De Schipper replaced Mrs. Wendy Waijboer for activity 2.5. Side letter No. 6 can be found in annex 16.

As part of the training programme, around 36 employees from Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic and National Reference Centres have participated in a one day seminar on quality control systems.

At the request of the component coordinator Mrs. De Schipper also concentrated on the following:

- Evaluation of the management system and the system's documentation in the National Reference Centres.
- ISO/IEC 17025:2005 comparison with the standard issued in 1999 – main differences.

Main conclusions of the mission according to STE:

A lot of work has been accomplished. Sop's, working protocols, other recording of the laboratory processes, handling and control of equipment and the quality manual are generally in order, but some work on the latter still needs to be done.

Mrs. De Schipper's full mission report can be found in annex 17.

With the finalization of activities 2.3 and 2.5 the Second Phase (development) of Component II is now completed.

Activity 2.6 Development and implementation of the quality control systems and progressive detection methods

This activity, which is delayed, will take place in June and July and will be implemented by the same three experts mentioned above, Mr. Galama (July), Mr. Melchers and Mrs. De Schipper (June). Mrs. De Schipper will combine activities 2.6 and 3.3. Reports on activity 2.6 (and 3.3) will appear in the 6th Quarterly Report.

Activity 2.7 Final assessment of the implementation of the new quality control system

Mrs. De Schipper will fulfil this activity, which is delayed, in the 1st week of September and will combine it with activity 3.4. A report of this activity (and 3.4) will appear in the 7th Quarterly Report.

Update on the accreditation

As part of the accreditation process, the assessment of the commission from SNAS has been realized. The nonconformities that were found will be removed in the next two months. Mrs. Bosá will prepare for SNAS a report of this process. The next step will be the SNAS inspection of the fulfilment, possibly by mid September. As the result of the inspection, the SNAS will issue a Certificate of the Accreditation, by the end of September, if all goes according to schedule.

Update on TEMPEST

The complete delivery of the hardware was realized in February 2006. All Regional PHAs in Slovakia, all NRCs included in the Twinning project and the Department of Infectious Diseases Control Section at PHA SR received the "workplaces" consisting of PC (installed software MS Word XP Professional and full version of MS Office), printer and back-up system according to requirements for technical specification. The part of the delivery was also the hardware for central system in Regional PHA in Banská Bystrica. This hardware consists of 2 main servers (application, database server) and 3 small servers (back-up, proxy and anti-virus server).

Update on VITRUM

The first and second phase phases were ended with the complete delivery for Regional PHAs Košice and Banská Bystrica and partly for PHA Bratislava for the reconstructed area. Half of the area still needs to be reconstructed therefore delivery into this part will be realised after its reconstruction. Estimated delivery finalization is in August 2006.

As a part of the activities 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7, the translation of the Slovak Quality Manual into English has been finalized in April. The Dutch STE Mrs. De Schipper in her profession as quality manager has thus already been able to go through this English version thoroughly with Mrs. Bosá and her team during activity 2.5. During activities 2.6 and 2.7 this Manual will again form the basis of these missions.

Component III

For this component all preparatory work and the implementation has been done. This component is in the finalizing stages of completion.

During March-April 2006 the External Quality Assurance System of PHA intended for routine microbiology laboratories was tested.

Both Salmonella and ATB NRCs have sent independent control samples to all of 56 local laboratories in Slovakia. There were 2 separate samples for ATB susceptibility testing and 2 other samples for Salmonella identification and susceptibility testing.

The experimental PHA EQAS run can be preliminary evaluated as follows:

- More than 95% of routine laboratories responded.
- For Salmonella PHA EQAS, 71.4% of responding laboratories achieved full success, 92.7% were partially successful.
- For susceptibility testing PHA EQAS, the overall success was 94.85% however, only 84.5% of responding laboratories identified tested antimicrobial resistance mechanisms correctly.

Activity 3.3 Development of Standard Operating Procedures for external quality assurance based on the new-implemented quality assurance system

Mrs. De Schipper will replace Mrs. Waijboer for this activity, which is delayed. She will combine it with the implementation of activity 2.6. This mission will take place in June (12/6-16/6). One day will be spend on activity 3.3 and four days on activity 2.6. Because this activity is already running according to schedule, one day, instead of the three days originally planned, is enough for the STE to get an overview and have some time for discussions.

The sideletter for approval of the new expert and a report on the mission for activity 3.3 (together with activity 2.6) will appear in the 6th Quarterly Report.

Due to the postponement of activity 3.3 The Second Phase (development) of Component III is not yet completed.

Mrs. De Schipper will also replace Mrs. Waijboer for *Activity 3.4: Implemetation and testing in 5 selected pilot workplaces of Standard Operating Procedures for external quality assurance* and will combine it with activity 2.7 which will take place in September. During this mission two days will be spend on activity 3.4 and five days on activity 2.6 (still to be confirmed by Mrs. De Schipper). Because this activity is running according to schedule, two to three days, instead of the seven days originally planned, will be enough for the STE to implement a short evaluation on the whole Component III.

The sideletter for approval of the new expert and a report on the mission for activity 3.4 (together with activity 2.7) will appear in the 6th Quarterly Report.




As a part of activities 3.3 and 3.4 two Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) about validation will be translated from Dutch into Slovak. Validation is the base of the ISO 17025 standard and thus also a very important part of the accreditation. The translation will be finished in June.

Timing & Delays

Adherence to time schedule¹

The adherence to the time schedule is expressed in the following table:

1

	Activity planned
	Activity implemented
	Activity delayed by more than 3 months

Activity	Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Component 1																					
Activity 1.1		█	█																			
Activity 1.2			█	█																		
Activity 1.3				█	█																	
Activity 1.4				█	█																	
Activity 1.5					█	█																
Activity 1.6						█	█															
Activity 1.7							█	█														
Activity 1.8								█	█	█	█	█	█									
Activity 1.9									█	█	█	█	█	█								
Activity 1.10										█	█	█	█	█								
Activity 1.11																						
Activity 1.12																						
Activity 1.13																						
Activity 1.14																						
Activity 1.15																						

Activity \ Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Component 2																					
Activity 2.1	█	█																			
Activity 2.2			█	█	█																
Activity 2.3				█	█					█											
Activity 2.4				█	█	█	█	█													
Activity 2.5								█	█	█											
Activity 2.6										█	█	█	█								
Activity 2.7													█								
Activity 2.8													█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█

Activity	Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Component 3																					
Activity 3.1																						
Activity 3.2																						
Activity 3.3																						
Activity 3.4																						

Recuperation of delays

There are delays in implementing activities in Components II and III: activities 2.6, 2.7 and 3.3 (more than three months).

An overview of the missions of the experts as originally planned is attached as annex 18.

Assessment

Overall assessment of progress

In general the progress of the project is in line with the revised work schedule. There have been some delays in implementing activities in all three components. However most of the activities that were delayed are already planned to take place. This also counts for the activities that are on schedule. Next to this, the planning for the extension of some activities (activities 1.10, 1.12 and 1.15) is now in process.

See annex 19 - Overview activities until end of project.

Component I

There is only a minor delay: part of activity 1.11. This will take place in June.

All other activities for Component I are already planned to take place.

See annex 19 - Overview activities until end of project.

Component II

All other activities for Component II are already planned to take place.

See annex 19 - Overview activities until end of project.

Component III

The two remaining activities for this component are already planned to take place.

See annex 19 - Overview activities until end of project.

Issues

At the end of February 2006 Mr. Valášek started his work at the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic as acting director and Chief Hygienist. Quite soon after his appointment, the RTA office staff had some very negative experiences with, Mrs. Marušáková, the new head of the international affairs and part of the new management: the RTA office staff was ordered to move to another room; impolite and negative behaviour towards RTA office staff and expressing serious doubts about the value of the Twinning project. Both BC- and MC project leaders expressed their worries about this. The BC project leader discussed this with Mr. Valášek as well. The latter apologised at an introductory meeting with the RTA but also said that he had concerns about some parts of the project, especially about the financial resources for the reconstruction of the PHA building in Bratislava, necessary for the success of the project. He requested a full and detailed report on the Twinning project from the BC project manager which she handed in a few weeks ago. After reading this report Mr. Valášek would then after Easter organize a meeting. This meeting has not taken place yet.

Although, the management is behaving in a polite way and is not bothering the RTA office at the moment, it is still not very helpful and cooperative, e.g. with donating money for the catering during workshops.

Mr. Aarendonk, Dutch project manager at NSPOH, a.o. for the Twinning Project in the Slovak Republic, will leave NSPOH as from the 1st of July 2006. Because of his leaving there have been delays in responding to matters concerning the project. However, it is expected that the continuity of support by NSPOH will be provided for because as from the 1st of June, Mrs. Lot Heijke has replaced Mr. Aarendonk as the new project manager at NSPOH.

Recommendations

Component I

For activity 1.11 the following recommendations were made by Mrs. Timen:

- Assess the goals of this project component on short and long term; formulate the content of the remaining activities on the basis of this assessment. The development of the new software requires a great deal of energy and it is my feeling that other activities in this component are subordinated to the software development.
- Organize an in depth training for a small group in methodology of outbreak investigation:
 - lecture on basic epidemiological principles and statistic significance (RR, OR, AR, CI, p, confounding and bias)
 - interactive training with a case – control study

Component II

For activity 2.5 the following recommendations were made by the three experts:

Mr. Galama:

- To expand the number of facilities for virus diagnostics (for example in university or teaching hospitals) as to increase the numbers of samples being analysed for viruses which can be a PH threat.

Mr. Melchers:

- The NCR is now establishing the infrastructure for reliable molecular diagnosis. This point will influence all further developments in this area and I therefore consider this aspect as a major break-point for future work. At this point I highly recommend to bring all molecular diagnostics work in a single unit under the supervision of full-area over-viewing head. This means that both molecular diagnosis and typing should be concentrated in the separate laboratories (clean-lab, clinical lab and analysing lab). In the analysis lab all available and new equipment (PCR, Light Cyler, PFGE) should be brought together, accessible for every assay.
- It is recommended that the potential supervisor will get extensive training possibilities in this area (either by following courses or work-visits in established laboratories)
- It is recommended to implement RAPD and PFGE as molecular tools for outbreak and epidemiological analysis in the laboratory setting.
- It is recommended to incorporate the molecular diagnosis of parvovirus by PCR and enterovirus by real-time PCR (LightCycler)
- It is recommended to incorporate gene-targeted detection as an addition for non serological typable Salmonella strains.
- It will be important to establish a Slovakian working group on molecular diagnosis in which open discussions concerning newly acquired experiences will extend the possibilities to introduce these techniques country-wide.
- It will be important to establish a net-work for proficiency-panels to quarantine quality assessments.

Mrs. De Schipper:

- Reconstruction of the building especially climate control should be implemented asap.
- Active involvement of the top management towards the management system has to be described and implemented (ref: ISO 17025;2005, 4.1.6, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.7).
- A system of seeking active feedback from the institutes sending the samples should be described and implemented. (ref: ISO 17025;2005, 4.7.2).
- The instruments for continually improvement (ISO 17025;2005, 4.10) should be described and implemented (e.g. management of complaints, checklists for training of employees, vertical audits and management review).

- Although Mrs. Bosá is doing a tremendous good job it would be helpful for her to appoint a independent quality officer for document control and review and follow-up of corrective and preventive actions (metrology and internal auditing is already partly delegated).

Section 3. Expenditure

According to the Twinning manual (revision 2004), the total figures of disbursement for key groups of costs are described in this section of the quarterly report. A detailed financial report following the format for financial invoice report is enclosed as annex 20.

Total figures of disbursement for key groups of costs

Project management	€ 35.196,03
Activities component I	€ 6.444,65
Activities component II	€ 13.744,95
Activities component III	€ 0,00
Total budget	€ 505.816,95
Spent 1 st quarter	€ 98.563,43
Spent 2 nd quarter	€ 54.458,57
Spent 3 rd quarter	€ 12.799,05
Spent 4 th quarter	€ 35.813,63
Spent 5 th quarter	€ 55.385,63
Total spent	€ 257.020,32

It is expected that all activities will be completed within the duration of the project and within the approved project budget. It is foreseen that about 60% to 70% of the total budget will be used by the end of the project.