

START-UP REPORT

1. Identification

- Twinning light Project No.TLP01/35
- Period covered by the report 30th March to 31st May 2004
- Submitted by : Carlos García de Cortazar

2. Background

The accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU since 1st May 2004 will have an immediate direct effect on the Slovak public health system as regards to the implementation of the EU Regulations dealing with health assistance and cost refunding of health care provided within the territory of the states concerned. Council Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 as well as Decisions and Recommendations of the Administrative Committee for Social Security of Migrant Workers must be applied from the beginning by officials at different levels.

In order to make this possible ,the so called *Liaison Body* to be operational after the accession needs to improve and develop its capacity in terms of human resources and technology. Moreover considering the administrative structure of the Slovak Health System, in which several private as public insurance companies work in cooperation with the General Health Insurance Company. Lack of experience in either export of benefits in kind or settlement of both financial and information flow, required so as to EU Regulations to be successfully implemented, justified the present twinning light

3. Activities during the reporting period.

In compliance with article 6,2 in Annex A of Twinning Manual, the reporting period covers from 30thMarch to 31stMay,taking precedence the provisions on the subject contained in Annex III of the contract in case of conflict between them and Terms of Reference in Annex I.

During the first week of April the MS Project Leader and the permanent twinning light expert reached an agreement on a first meeting with the CC Project Leader and other representatives of the Slovak Ministry of Health and the beneficiary institution in Bratislava ,regarding the schedule for the activities on the covenant.

According to the above written, one study visit of 8people with interpreter from the institutions involved was planned and took place from 25thApril to 1st May in Spain, with the expected results, as said in the covenant. What means, keeping in touch with the operational way of the Liaison Body in Spain in a daily basis, as well as taking preliminary contacts with the short term experts designated to run seminars in Slovakia.

In the same meeting, the agenda for the proposed workshops and seminars was set out as follows:

Seminar1,on sickness and maternity,19 to 20 May
Seminar2,on European Health Card, 2 to 4 June
Seminar3,on Rulings in sickness and maternity,1 to 2 September
Seminar4,on E-forms, 14 to 17 June
Seminar5,on reimbursement of costs, 29 to 30 June
Seminar6,on telematics,21 to 24 June

The above schedule was modified as it is explained in Annex II.
Workshop, to be defined in September, according to the actual requirements of participants in previous activities.

Concerning the guide book to be issued at the end of the project, the Slovak partners agreed on the proposal from the Spanish PL, according to which, the representatives of the competent bodies involved should require from their employees to elaborate a list containing the topics to be included in the guide, taking into account that it should be a quite brief and clear compendium of the main items related to health assistance within the EU, targeted to general staff dealing with the subject in their daily work. That list should be sent to the tw-light expert no later than in the first half of June, in order to go through it and going on as it is said under point 5 of this report

The twinning light expert Veronica Meneses came to Bratislava on 15thMay and started to work on 17th .At her arrival, office room and equipment were already arranged by the mandated body.

The same day in the afternoon the mentioned expert met the Slovak Project Leader, Ms. Zuzana Skublova, and Mrs. Iveta Krbatova at the Ministry of Health, in order to settle some practical items concerning the project managing.

The first seminar, Seminar 1, was held in Bratislava on 19th and 20th May. Un undefined number of participants, around 30 people, coming from the Ministry as well as from the different Insurance Companies existing, were expected.

The sessions had a short theoretical part and a wider practical one ,consisting of actual cases to be studied and solved by the attendants.

The Spanish Project Leader, Mr.Carlos García de Cortazar, and the short term expert, Mrs. Marta Vives ,ran the sessions in Spanish with consecutive interpretation into Slovak. The participants got all the exposed material translated into Slovak.

On the 19thMay in the afternoon, when the first seminar day was over, the representatives of Slovak Ministry of Health, the Project Leader included, and the Spanish Project Leader and the twinning light expert from the Spanish side, met in order to clarify some technical proceeding issues related to the training organization.

At the end of first seminar, the permanent expert twinning light informed the participants about her stay in Bratislava until 29th July, showing her disposal in order to give advice on a daily basis, what will be combined with her assumed responsibilities on elaborating the guide book and organizing the training activities, as settled in the covenant

4. Financial Statemen

See annex attached

5. Assessment of activities

- Overall evaluation of the progress achieved during the period under consideration.

All the activities planned for the period considered have developed successfully in time.

To remark, the willingness of both Project Leaders to achieve the expected results.

From a practical point of view, the close contact of the Slovak participants with the experts in Spain during the study visit, was not only useful for their daily work in future but also in order to select the attendants for next seminars. As a consequence of this, the number of participants, initially around 20 for each seminar, was expanded up to 30 people, some being always the same, some changing depending on the subject.

That can be understood as a considerable success as regards to the interest and concern of the officials to be responsible for the matters which promoted the present project.

Also the role of the permanent expert during her first period of staying in Bratislava has been clarified in accordance with the terms of the covenant

- Judgement on likelihood of completing project within time scale and budget

So far, the agreed schedule for seminars and workshops is likely to be observed, since almost all of them have been arranged for the first half of the running period.

Concerning the technical guidebook, the bodies involved are requested to send a proposal of its content to the Twinning light expert, who will elaborate a draft version with the help from the short term experts, to be discussed and revised until the end of July.

Concerning the budgetary provisions, there has not been any unexpected expense by the time being. The proper use of funds will moreover help to achieve the completion of the whole project, since after the first activities developed, we can estimate an approximate overall cost of the remaining ones

- Highlighting of any activities not in the original plan, or activities cancelled

Although not strictly an addition, we could mention here the fact that a previous visit from the expert Ms. Meneses took place during the first week of April, on the occasion of the planned visit of the Spanish Project Leader.

Once the project started to run, monthly meetings were appointed by the Slovak counterpart, as a way of steering the progress of the twinning. The first one took place on 27th May, with

the assistance of the Slovak PL and two other representatives from the Ministry of Health, one representative from the General Insurance Company, one representative from the Government office, one representative from ECD, one representative from CFCU and the permanent twilight expert

No activity to the original plan was cancelled during this period.

- Update on general environment, including any risks for project implementation

The interest of both Ministry of Health and beneficiary institution is remarkable. Nevertheless, the Slovak reality going to a new public health system and all the legal changes to be into force from next year, may jeopardize the successful implementation of the project when there was not the required cooperation among all bodies involved.

Also that structure may create some difficulties in order to determine which responsibilities should be assumed by each of them.

In any case, willingness to solve ongoing problems has to be pointed out.

Some initial problems arose regarding the organization of seminars, due to the lack of time of the Twinning light expert in order to arrange everything in time.

.It was finally solved at the meeting on 19thMay,when it was settled that since then, the twinning light expert would be responsible for organizing training activities, by using the budget headings allocated in the project budget according to the twinning light contract arrangements. For this purpose, the beneficiary institution should support the Twinning light expert with technical help to enable smooth running of project activities.

6. Conclusion

Although it is not easy to evaluate the progress of the project for such a short period, it is to be said that the few activities undertaken have aimed at the objectives.

The first meeting in Bratislava allowed to settle the calendar for all the activities related, included the study visit to Spain.

During that study visit, the selected participants could contact their future colleagues in the Spanish *Liaison body* and also had the opportunity of expressing practical matters on the subject to be dealt after the effective accession, what is actually the main objective of this twinning, since it will lead the employees concerned to the expected results on the covenant. Furthermore, in spite of being already scheduled the seminars by then, the living discussions held among the counterparts during the sessions helped the Spanish experts to make their future participations in Slovakia much more suitable to the actual needs and requirements of the CC staff.

And as a conclusion of the above explained, the participation of representatives of different agencies concerned with the application of EU Regulations on health assistance,

should be appreciated so as to make clearer the content of the guide book to be issued by the final period of the project.

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