

Draft – Application for an EU grant

Programme:

Community action in the field of Public Health (2003 – 2008)

2.2. Responding rapidly and in co-ordinated fashion to health threats

? 2.2.3. Health security and preparedness (Article 3.2.a., Annex point 2.4.)

Full title:

Establishment of a network of EU Port Health Authorities for the realization of communication, cooperation and crisis management in accordance with WHO health regulations

GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

On the basis of national laws, European and WHO health regulations, port health authorities in all countries are as institutions responsible for control measures obliged to ascertain the protection of people against epidemics, disasters, bioterrorism and the health protection of seafarers. The project aims at building up capacity of communication, cooperation and crisis management in all European port health authorities according to respective EU/WHO regulations.

Such a system will substantially improve efficiency and effectiveness of port health authorities of individual ports on the spot but also jointly all over Europe. In case of acute hazards, for instance endemic infectious diseases, hazardous goods or bioterrorism, detailed information can be exchanged and specific countermeasures initiated and coordinated Europe-wide. With regard to the global risks of infection, specific early-warning systems, controls and immediate protection by responsible legal institutions including the medical port services of port health authorities can be realized on this basis. Furthermore, it will be possible to obtain a national and European standardization of ship checking procedures and controls with a high level of hygiene (quality management) by maintaining national and international decrees (EU guideline 92/29, IHR/WHO). In case of emergencies such as bioterrorists' attacks, the information and communication system will permit to inform authorities and ministries promptly and comprehensively. This includes isolation and quarantine measures in compliance with legal requirements.

Further objectives include the realization of a European-wide service for the cooperation of governmental administrations.

Desired outcomes:

- Increased interoperability and optimization of interfaces with related tasks of EU countries.
- Support of cooperation and necessary coordinated adaptations with regard to constantly changing threats and organisational problems and challenges for the development of organisation and structure of the responsible authorities.
- Finally, other regions, ports not belonging to EU countries like other parts of the Baltic Sea, Mediterranean and African regions can be connected. This also includes inland water transportation and aviation.
- Based on new experience, suggestions for community initiatives will be made in order to overcome existing hampering factors.

GENERAL CONTEXT

Some European port health authorities have introduced in recent years data processing equipment. Other port health authorities still use a filing card-index system. Up to now, heterogeneous systems and structures as well as information gaps and a lacking data network prevent cooperation between port health authorities within the same country and especially between different countries (a supranational communication and cooperation of port health authorities does not exist yet).

The implementation of a network of EU port health authorities including all EU ports will overcome these shortcomings and serve as a basis for the enforcement of respective EU regulations and international health regulations. Furthermore, it will contribute to forthcoming revisions.

Biosecurity in ports, respective procedures, strategies, and policy are important national tasks which necessitate intensive communication and coordination between EU countries. This aim cannot be reached by regional/national solutions. An Europe-wide settlement can overcome the current problems with isolated activities of individual ports and substantially improve efficiency and effectiveness of port health authorities all over Europe.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

On the basis of European and international health regulations, European port health authorities as legal institutions responsible for control measures in ports will develop a network of communication, cooperation and crisis management including

- standardization of ship checking procedures and controls with a high level of hygiene (quality management) involving the health state of crew and passengers, the risk of infections and bioterrorism on board (among others deratisation exemption certificate, hygiene certificate, other health documents, inspections of medical chest, hazardous goods, drinking water, consideration of port of embarkation / last and next port);
- checking the results of previous inspections in the same or in other ports (common data-base);
- coordination of activities of port health authorities of different countries with regard to individual ships (entering different ports) as well as on a general scale in order to save resources and to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- optimized consultation and comprehensive information of authorities, ministries as well as the crew in all relevant health aspects, especially in case of emergencies;
- establishment of a forum including all EU port health authorities to improve cooperation and organize regular meetings to further develop common procedures and to overcome hampering factors.