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Track: Policy workshop

Section: Not applicable

Title: The Joint Action for ECHIM; taking the development and implementation of the European Community Health Indicators shortlist forward

Chairpersons: Arpo Aromaa (THL, Finland), Nick Fahy (European Commission, Luxembourg)

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Workshop abstract:

As of 1998, the European Commission has called for and funded projects which aimed to develop a list of public health indicators for implementation at European level. In successive order these have been the ECHI-1 (European Community Health Indicators) project, the ECHI-2 project and the ECHIM project. The main outcome of these projects has been the so-called ECHI shortlist; a list of 88 indicators, together with accompanying metadata (definitions, calculation methods, preferred data sources etc.). This shortlist is at the core of European Union public health monitoring policy. For that reason the Commission in the 2008 call for proposals called for a Joint Action for working on the implementation of the ECHI shortlist in all Member States. A proposal was submitted and accepted for funding and on January 1st 2009 and the Joint Action started. In this workshop a comprehensive overview of the ECHI work will be presented. First of all, the decade of developmental research preceding the Joint Action will be summarized as to sketch the point of departure for the current activities. Technical specificities of Joint Actions (a new financing mechanism), as well as the most important administrative information concerning the Joint Action for ECHIM (e.g. which project partners and which Member States are involved) will be briefly described. Secondly the objectives, methods and first results of the Joint Action will be presented, together with problems encountered in practice and problems expected for the future. Thirdly, the main means of dissemination of the indicators and their metadata will be presented, which consists of two (coherent) websites. Lastly, the policy context for the ECHI work will be sketched. This will include a historic overview, leading up to the role of ECHI in the currently effective Health Strategy. Moreover, the most important new developments relevant for public health monitoring will be presented, such as European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and European Health Examination Survey (EHES) developments. The added value of this workshop is that participants will be informed on the state of the art of one of the main EU public health monitoring policies, and that this will be done in a comprehensive way, looking at the ECHI work from a historical, political and practical angle.

Abstract 1 title: State of the art of the work on the European Community Health Indicators shortlist

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Abstract 1: The European Community Health Indicators (ECHI) work started over a decade ago with the ECHI-I project. This project acquired a central place in the EU Health Monitoring Programme, collecting proposals for indicator definitions from many European projects. These proposals were arranged systematically in the ECHI long list. During the successive ECHI-II project, from the long list a shortlist of about 80 indicators was selected for priority

implementation: the start of a European public health monitoring system. The next phase was coordinated by the ECHIM project. ECHIM identified national health information experts, and started mapping the availability of data in the Member States (MS) for calculating the shortlist indicators. Indicator metadata (calculation methods, preferred data sources etc.) was documented in a structured way in the ECHI Documentation Sheets, and an update of the shortlist was performed. In this presentation, the main outcomes of the three ECHI projects and their coherence will be explained in more detail. In 2007 the EU Health Strategy White Paper 'Together for Health' was adopted, stating as one of its actions the implementation of a European ECHI system. In 2008 the European Commission therefore called for a Joint Action (JA) for ECHIM. This new financing mechanism implies a direct invitation from the Commission to the MS to present a proposal. Public Health Institutes from five countries took the lead in preparing the proposal, and 24 MS in total gave a declaration of intent for participating in the JA for ECHIM. It started per January 1st of this year and has a 3 year duration. More information about the JA's goals, methods and administrative structure will be presented during the workshop.

Abstract 2 title: Entering a next phase in the developmental work - starting the implementation process

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Abstract 2: The Final Report of the European Community Health Indicators Monitoring (ECHIM) project presented a review of availability and comparability of data and ECHI shortlist indicators. To be able to implement the ECHI shortlist in practice, however, comparability of data in international databases should be further improved, quality and comparability of existing national databases investigated, new databases identified, and indicators refined. More specifically, implementation entails putting the indicators in practical use by i) introducing them to local administrators and decision makers, ii) helping to create and modify data sources, iii) creating and testing a temporary system for data flow from Member States (MS) to an EU-ECHI database, iv) setting up a presentation system and v) analyzing and interpreting the results for health policy and planning. To achieve this, a network of MS experts has been established, and general guidelines for implementation have been developed. ECHIM supports the national ECHIM experts in formulating feasible short- and long-term national implementation plans, building up national teams, and taking actions to develop new data sources or improve the use of existing ones for ECHI Indicators for which currently no adequate data are available. Furthermore, a demo version of the data collection and data flow from MS to a temporary central EU-ECHI database will be planned and tested. Indicator data will be presented through a web-system (see the presentation on the ECHIM websites). By the end of the three-year term an ongoing process for implementing health indicators should have been set up and progress documented in most MS. It is clear, however, that a permanent arrangement must be established in the long run.

Abstract 3 title: Web based dissemination of the indicator data and accompanying metadata

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Abstract 3: The goal of the ECHI work ultimately is to provide a solid evidence base for policy making. To fulfil this goal, internationally comparable data based on the ECHI shortlist indicators need to be disseminated, first of all to (inter)national policy makers, but also to public health

experts, citizens and media. The main means of disseminating the shortlist data in the Joint Action for ECHIM will be through the internet. At least for 2009, the European Union Public Health Information and Knowledge System ([www.euphix.eu](http://www.euphix.eu)) will be used as the platform. This system is structured according to the ECHI shortlist and has multiple possibilities for presenting interactive graphs and maps. During the early stages of the Joint Action it will be discussed with the European Commission how to shape the ECHI data presentations in the future, as currently several websites exist containing such information (EUPHIX, SANCO site, EU Health Portal), and a more coherent approach is needed. The participants of the workshop will be informed on these developments. Next to the data itself, metadata will also be made available in the Joint Action. The website [www.healthindicators.eu](http://www.healthindicators.eu) has been developed for this purpose and contains, among other things, information on indicator definition/calculation, and on the availability and comparability of data in/between the EU Member States. Close links exist between the data presentations in EUPHIX and the metadata in the healthindicators site. Both sites will be shown during the presentation. During the course of the Joint Action availability and comparability of data for the shortlist indicators will improve. These developments will be reflected in regular updates of both the EUPHIX and the healthindicators sites.

Abstract 4 title: Policy context of the European Community Health Indicators developments

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Abstract 4: In the 1990s there was a growing need for solid international public health comparisons, to serve as evidence base for both national and supranational policy making. Therefore ten years ago the European Commission initiated the development of a European public health monitoring system. The history of Commission initiatives will be sketched in this presentation, starting with the funding of the ECHI-I and II projects in the Health Monitoring Programme (ECHI = European Community Health Indicators), followed by the ECHIM project in the successive Public Health Programme 2003-2008. The current Health Programme 2008-2013 is an implementing tool for the Health Strategy 'Together for Health'. Setting up the ECHI system has been incorporated as a policy action in the Health Strategy to ensure a solid and continuous scientific evidence base for policy making. To operationalise this action, the Commission called in 2008 for a Joint Action for ECHIM, appealing to the Member States to commit to this next phase of the ECHI work. Next to the Joint Action, currently there are several other Commission activities related to implementing the ECHI system. These include work on the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), which is being carried out in cooperation with Eurostat, and work on the European Health Examination Surveys (EHES). Both EHIS and EHES will serve as important data sources for the ECHI indicators in the (near) future. The state of the art related to the EHIS and EHES will be presented in this workshop. The implementation and maintenance of the ECHI system is a structural policy, which requires continuous Community and Member State action. To conclude this presentation, possible scenarios for a sustainable ECHI system will be explored.