

EAN News

Newsletter of the EPIET Alumni Network



www.epietalum.net

October 2012

Fàilte gu Dùn Èideann,

is how you will hopefully be welcomed on October 24th this year, for it is beautiful Edinburgh where this year's ESCAIDE 2012 is held.

You could monitor our frantic activities in the run-up to the conference thanks to our emails sent introducing e.g. the EAN photo-contest or asking you for support as a moderator for poster sessions or EAN prize guide.

In case you are asking: no, it's not too late to volunteer as moderator or EAN prize jury member. Just drop us a line at eanboard@gmail.com.

One last call for participation: we are setting up an evening event based surveillance system at Edinburgh's pubs and still look for volunteers to man the surveillance posts. If you want to take part, grab a fellow or alumni after the last sessions and man the battlestations!

The EAN Board

Lorenzo, Florian, Helen, Chris, Annick and Marc

We kindly ask you to contact the EAN board (eanboard@gmail.com) in case you want to get information on your membership payment (put in the subject: **membership payment**).

Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to eanboard@gmail.com to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer).

Name of Bank: HSBC UK

Bank address: HSBC UK, 18 London Street, Norwich NR2 1LG, UK

Account Holder: Epiet Alumni Network

Account number: 71822755

Sort code: 400515

IBAN: GB11MIDL40051571822755

BIC/Swift: MIDLGB22

NB: the account is in the UK so also payments in GBP are allowed. In case GBP is your preferred currency contact the EAN Treasurers at eanboard@gmail.com.

From the EAN Board

EAN Membership

EAN is currently comprised of 327 members. The EAN is not only comprised by alumni of the EPIET and the EUPHEM. All graduates and current fellows of European Field Epidemiology Training Programmes can join the EAN. External applications from colleagues working in public health epidemiology are also very welcome; they need to be endorsed by 2 EAN members. If you want to join, please send an email to eanboard@gmail.com to request the application form. Our statutes specify that external members may not exceed 10% of the regular members.

EAN membership fees

The annual membership fee is €20 and runs from January until December. Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees, according to the accepted statute's change at the 2011 General Assembly.

ESCAIDE 2012

For all information about ESCAIDE 2012, please check: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/escaide>

EAN is looking for people from the EPIET Alumni network that will be attending ESCAIDE 2012 to help us in comprising a jury to judge the Best Oral and Poster presentations for the EAN prize. There are 21 parallel oral-presentation sessions and 2 poster sessions this year that would require judges, so we really need your help! You do not have to sign up for all the sessions - but we would like a minimum of 2 judges per parallel oral-presentation session and a minimum of 3 judges for each poster session.

You will be provided with an easy to score grid, and would be asked to complete these for the sessions that you sign up for. Previous judges have mentioned that they enjoyed the experience, so please help us out this year! For those that volunteer, we promise you will get a little surprise gift to thank you for your efforts. Send an email to eanboard@gmail.com to volunteer.

The ESCAIDE Scientific Committee is still seeking for motivated colleagues who can moderate the poster sessions at the conference. In total, 154 posters will be presented at ESCAIDE in 3 main sessions. Each session is divided into sub-sessions. One moderator should facilitate one sub-session.

In total there are 20 sub-sessions, this means that on average there are 7.7 posters per sub-session, so each moderator would facilitate blocks of approximately 7 posters each. The sessions last 90 minutes so you will need to make sure that each poster is allocated approximately 12 minutes (allowing for a brief presentation from the author and questions/discussion).

We believe that this will be a very rewarding and entertaining opportunity to practice or acquire chairing skills and we are encouraging especially our recent members to apply. We are also encouraging supervisors of fellows to apply and all others EAN members. If you wish to volunteer for this exciting opportunity to become a moderator, please write an email to eanboard@gmail.com and cc: luciana.muresan@ecdc.europa.eu, andreas.jansen@ecdc.europa.eu.

EAN General Assembly

Our yearly General Assembly (GA) will be held during the Escaide Conference in Edinburgh. This year, the GA will take place on Thursday 25th October 2012 from 18.00 to 20.00 in the room named "Fintry" on the 3rd level of the conference venue. The agenda of the GA will be distributed in early October.

The board elections will be held during the annual GA. Physical votes will be accepted during the GA. For those not attending the GA, electronic votes will be opened from 8.00am to 8.00pm on the same day (25th October). Four out of the six board posts are up for election. These posts are the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Deputee Secretary. You find the terms of reference for the board members at (login required): <http://www.epietalum.net/content/terms-reference-board-members>

As a board member, you will be involved in EAN's regular and ad-hoc activities. The board usually has a telephone meeting once per month, with an annual physical board meeting in December/January, to set the agenda.

If you are interested to stand for election, please let us know before Monday the 22nd October 2012. Please specify for which position you are standing. Alternatively, you can make your candidacy known to us just prior to the GA - note that this doesn't allow getting any delegated or electronic votes. In consultation with the candidates, a list of members standing for each position will be presented during the GA. We would need the candidate to provide a

quick description of themselves and how they could contribute to EAN's future and its members.

We are looking forward to receiving your applications!

Opinion Piece

By Arnold Bosman, Head of Public Health Training Section, ECDC

Where EPIET wants to go

In the previous newsletter an important question was raised: where is EPIET going? The question came straight from the heart. It reflected concerns and sentiments of those who are strongly committed to EPIET and who had felt a sense of shock since a budget cut reduced the 2012 EU-track fellowship by 40%. In addition, we at ECDC had decided to discontinue the flawed individual fellowship grants that left EU track fellows in an 'administrative limbo' where neither tax authorities, nor health insurances or pension funds would easily recognise their employment status. The new set of administrative agreements that we had rolled out over the network, proved to be little or not compatible with the regulations of a number of training sites.

The dramatic effect of the budget cut and the difficulties created by the new Framework Partnership Agreements between ECDC and training sites fuelled a strong debate at the EPIET Training Site Forum in May. ECDC leadership promised to engage in a 'broad consultation' involving all stakeholders at different levels in order to address the problems. The objective was to seek views of the network on several key issues: the salary levels of EU track fellows, the mechanism to host those salaries, the principles for selecting and placing fellows among the EU Member States, the proportions of seats distributed among EPIET-EU, EPIET-MS, EUPHEM and Associated FETP's. This consultation is available online since 17 September (ECDC Extranet). Stakeholders without access to ECDC Extranet have received a Word questionnaire as well, to be returned before 9 October by email.

That is where we are now, and the questions that were raised in the EAN Newsletter will for a part be addressed by the consultation. Other questions I can clarify here. EPIET is and will remain a flagship of ECDC. Under the Centre's governance, the training programme has expanded to unprecedented proportions. The cohort "12" (2006) counted 12 EU-track fellows and 7 from EPIET associated programmes, as the first 'ECDC' cohort. Five years later the cohort size had more than doubled (40), including 7 EPIET Member State Track fellows, 4 Public Health Microbiology (EUPHEM), 12 EPIET associated and 17 EU track fellows.

This year's unplanned cohort reduction has to be considered a very unpleasant incident, due to the EU wide budget cuts that also affected our Centre. Prior to the cuts in May 2012, the projected Training budget for 2013 (with the 12 EU-track, 4 EUPHEM and 12-MS track fellows) included an expansion of 7% compared to the 2012 budget. In May of this year we understood that such a budget growth for 2013 would not only be unaffordable, we would in fact have to reduce the budget by 5% in order to achieve the Centre-wide targets. Most Euros for the planned year of 2013 were already fixed as costs for the existing cohort (2011), the EPIET coordinator team, and the costs for training modules. Firing cohort 2011 fellows was no option. Reducing coordinators or discontinuing modules would affect quality of the programme. Even moving all modules to low cost countries would not achieve a 12 % reduction of the original budget. The only leverage to achieve this with certainty was to reduce the 2012 cohort by 40%. I can tell you: this was a very tough choice.

In the current economic crisis, no one can give guarantees for future budgets, which is true for EU agencies and for National Institutes alike. These are external factors. Still, ECDC remains strongly committed to the EPIET and EUPHEM fellowships. It is important to be aware that even with the budget cuts for 2013, the proportion of the budget that ECDC allocates to EPIET and related training has never been higher than in 2013; 21% of the ECDC's "operational budget" (i.e. the budget for all of ECDC activities, excluding staff salaries and rent of the building). The plans for recruitment of next cohorts include having 12 EU-track, 12 MS-track, 4 EUPHEM and 12 EPIET associated (FETP) fellows, aiming for a total cohort size of 40, as was originally planned.

Finally, I want to share my personal view on the concerns that Florian expressed on reducing the number of EU track fellows. He fears that this will lead to loss of diversity and skills in the long run. I am positive that the opposite may happen; even if we remain at 12 each year for EU-track epidemiology fellows, then this is higher than the average EU track cohort size we have had since the start of EPIET. And look at how (with these numbers) EPIET has created a strong and diverse network, which is largely represented by EAN. In addition, ECDC has ventured to include public health microbiology as a new discipline, which I truly hope may grow beyond the 4 we have now each year. I believe that MS track fellows and EAP will contribute other essential forms of diversity, mainly representing in depth knowledge and experience of the 27 different public health systems that constitute the EU. This is essential if we aim to have a network that benefits from practical experience from all EU Member States. Such diversity will foster a strong network of disease prevention and control experts that include epidemiology and microbiology both at Member State level and at the international level.

With the input from the current broad consultation, ECDC aims to continue the capacity building through

training to reduce inequalities in workforce strengths. We hope to get specific input on matters of salary levels of fellows, the balance between proportions of EU-track, MS-track, EUPHEM and EAP and a fair distribution process of fellows over Member States. In addition everyone may expect from ECDC that we find ways to have modules in cheaper accommodations. We aim that future fellows will get at least the same or even better opportunities that previous cohorts have had.

With the confidence that I have in the continued support of ECDC management, I am optimistic that we will come out of the current depression stronger and with a just distribution of resources. And with that we are still going towards the same goal as we had since 1995: "to create a network of professionals throughout Europe trained to use a standard approach in intervention epidemiology including field work, surveillance, applied research, communication and the use of epidemiological information as the basis for public health action".

Stories from the field

S.O.S. Summer Olympic Surveillance London

By Ettore Severi, EPIET Fellow Cohort 16

In October 2010, at the very first meeting of my EPIET fellowship at the Health Protection Agency (HPA), I asked Dr. Crook, one of my supervisors, whether it was possible to work on a project related to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games. In a short while I was made part of the Health Protection Event Based Surveillance (EBS) and was asked to formulate a protocol.

The job was interesting and did not look too hard. EBS was one of the several surveillance systems enhanced or newly designed for the Olympic Games by the HPA. It had to be a simple system collecting information from the Agency's cells around England to detect and inform the HPA Olympic Coordination Centre (OCC) about possible infectious disease threats to the Games.

In the following 18 months we disseminated 19 drafts and 3 final versions of the EBS protocol. Every other day there was a meeting with possible stakeholder to coordinate the several surveillance systems under enhancement or development. Every two months we had exercises and Games simulations to test the systems. In April last year I could not stand any more the sound of the acronym EBS - and I think that my supervisor could not stand it either... STOP PREPARATION, we needed to act!

Finally, by the end of June everything looked ready: the Games would have kicked off in less than a month and EBS would have started working on a daily basis on 2nd July. The countdown was almost finished...

and then suddenly my daughter was born. Well, not that suddenly. We had been waiting for her since almost 9 months, but she arrived the very day before the start of the EBS activity I had so long planned.

Taking 2 weeks of paternity was a great way to test how the system actually worked...

I have confused memories of this summer. Everybody in London was very excited and very happy. The Games went through very well. The Brits had organised all in details: great athletes, great venues, great context and great atmosphere. Also the weather was good. Personally, I was very asleep.

Fortunately I had colleagues more energetic than me: the team working at EBS in London was excellent and saved the Games from infectious diseases disasters on a daily basis! Victoria (Hall) and Arnaud (Le Menach) seat on the EBS chair in the Olympic Operation Room during several weeks ensuring the Games could keep going without alarms.

The EBS team collected and analysed infectious diseases reports from all HPA cells on a daily basis. Those events considered as serious threats to the Games were reported to the OCC for inclusion in their daily report to the Department of Health and Games organisers.

In fact we did not have much stuff to report, we detected some small clusters of VPD and gastroenteritis, but nothing dreadful. Bad bugs stayed quiet and people preferred to have fun rather than get sick.

I was on duty on the last Sunday of surveillance activity in an empty office in mid September. EBS was closing its activity three days later and I felt very emotional (and sleepy, of course). The next day I asked my supervisor whether I could be in charge of the EBS evaluation. And here I am, looking at EBS protocols, events, reports, risk assessments and attributes again and again.



S.O.S.: Olympia's Finest

Drop by drop. The recipe towards Polio eradication

By Grazia Caleo, EPIET Fellow Cohort 15

Drop by drop. The recipe towards Polio eradication

Two drops, four times to every last child: this is the recipe for polio eradication that is implemented across developing countries.

So, is it enough? It definitely is not enough if you do not add to the recipe vision, competence and enthusiasm. It is these three ingredients that make up the STOP Polio programme. STOP programme is made of volunteers coming from all over the world to be part of this global challenge. A challenge, that requires the establishment and functioning of routine immunization, the implementation of vaccination campaigns, surveillance and using this information to target mop up campaigns.

Then a simple recipe for polio eradication becomes a much larger project in countries like Tchad, Pakistan, Afganistan and Nigeria; the last four countries where polio virus is still circulation and causing permanent paralysis.

Since July I have been working in Chad as part of the STOP polio team. Chad is a landlocked country with a low level of vaccination coverage. As part of my responsibilities I work together with the Ministry of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), WHO and UNICEF to work towards eliminating polio in this country.

In August I travelled to the center of the country where there is a big heart shaped area called the Lac region. During a 5 day campaign we worked to look for every last child (0-15 years old) in the villages, islands in the lake, inside nomadic caravans, markets, streets, millet fields and even by following camels and donkeys.

Overall, 32,9472 children have been vaccinated, thousands of drops.... These will not be the last drops, neither the last child but another step was made in a remote place to make the vision of eradication tangible in every child.



A child in a remote village receives her oral vaccination.

STOP Polio is always looking for qualified epidemiologists to support polio eradication efforts across the world in terms of surveillance and data management. For more information, please look at: <http://www.cdc.gov/polio/stop/>

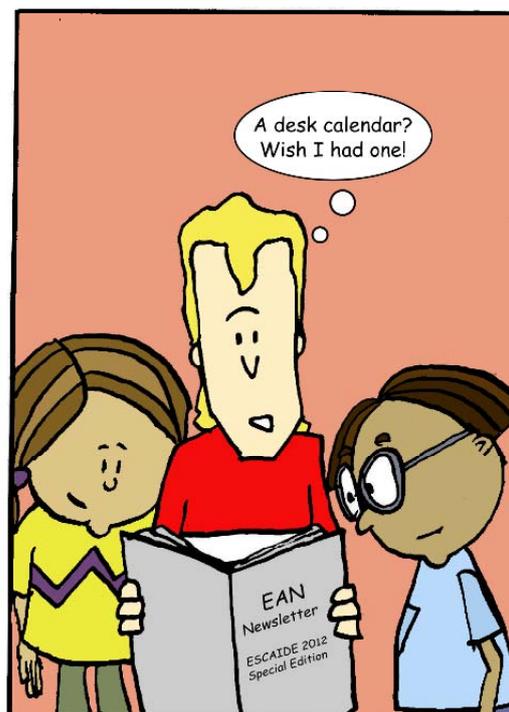
Epi-App Contest

Most of us have a smartphone or digital gadget like an iPod/ad to play angrybirds with or to watch the online asparagus grow on our favourite farm-app. Some of us may even have one or two serious applications on their devices that help with real work in the real world.

Enter crowd intelligence. We would you to tell us your favourite smartphone-like applications that would be useful for an intervention epidemiologist. This could be either for iOS (Apple) or Android and could be either online or offline. One example would be healthmap "outbreaks near me" (<http://www.healthmap.org/>).

We will daw a lucky winner for our special prize from all submission by December 6th.

Epi-Cartoon



This edition's Epi Cartoon is kindly provided by Esther Kissling and Florian Burckhardt from their www.disease-detectives.org initiative.

Contribute to the next EAN Newsletter!

We are currently looking for contributions for the next newsletter. Would you like to share an interesting experience? Have a cool tool? Are you doing an exciting job somewhere in the world and beyond? Please e-mail your story with subject: newsletter to EANboard@gmail.com.

Erratum Newsletter Spring 2012

By Florian Burckhardt, FETP fellow Cohort 12 (2006)

Dear EAN members,
in the summer issue of our newsletter I wrote in my op-ed article: "know your numbers". Ironically I humbly admit that I fell short of that. I wrote: "A simple solution suggested by ETSF to enable more fellowships is reducing the salary for EPIET from

above € 3500.- after tax (...) plus more than €400 monthly mobility allowance to a more realistic value in line with country specific payment levels." (<http://epietalum.net/content/ean-newsletter-summer-12>).

EPIET base salary for 2012 fellows was set at 2600 Euro plus 500 Euro mobility allowance (no kids and not married) respectively 700 Euro (married and/or children). The average cost-of-living adjustment factor is 114% based on the fellows-to-sites distribution of Bosman et al.

(<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=19381>).

That yields an average monthly salary for 2012 fellows (no kids or spouse) of 3535 Euro after tax. A fellow based in the lowest tier country would earn about 1900 Euro and a fellow in the highest 4100 Euro a month to give an idea about the range.

My stated average of 3900.- was unfortunately higher (10%) than the real average and I want to apologise for any trouble this might have caused to the EPIET team at ECDC.

Though my numbers were wrong I still maintain that these salaries are too high compared to what an experienced intervention epidemiologist in my and other countries would earn. I would also like to emphasise that my concern is not salary-envy but sustainable EPIET fellowships.