



Workshop on ILI Surveillance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## OVERVIEW

The South East European Center for Infectious Diseases Surveillance and Control (SECID) was established in 2013 at the Institute of Public Health in Tirana, Albania to support Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo,\* in the field of surveillance and control of infectious diseases, including influenza and International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation. Within this network Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo\* have been identified as priority countries. With the exception of Albania, the priority countries do not yet have National Influenza Centers (NIC).

## SURVEILLANCE

The influenza surveillance review guidance for sentinel influenza surveillance from the WHO Regional Office for Europe and CDC's international influenza assessment tool were used to assess the influenza surveillance systems in all SEE countries. Influenza workshops were organized in each country and surveillance assessments were organized in priority countries to decide about sentinel sites and population to be covered for ILI/ARI and SARI surveillance. Activities carried out in each of the priority countries included preparing influenza sentinel surveillance guidelines, identifying ILI and SARI sentinel sites, conducting workshops with

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Improved identification and diagnosis of influenza cases in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.\*
- Completed influenza surveillance assessments in all SEE countries.
- Prepared influenza surveillance guidelines and training packages for all SEE countries.
- Established SARI sentinel surveillance in Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo\* and also strengthened SARI surveillance in Albania, Croatia, and Serbia.
- Established ILI sentinel surveillance in Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo\* and improved ILI surveillance in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia.
- Purchased equipment and began training for influenza virus isolation in laboratories in Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.\*
- Revised pandemic preparedness plan in Romania and Croatia.
- Established joint protocols and activities for human and animal influenza surveillance in Bulgaria and Croatia.
- Prepared and piloted a web-based platform for reporting ILI/ARI and SARI Surveillance data in Albania, Macedonia and Croatia.

sentinel sites, testing guidelines with sentinel sites, establishing influenza surveillance coordinators in each sentinel site, as well as training on sample collection. SECID's information technology (IT) team also developed a template and a web-based system for ILI and SARI reporting.

## SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES

- Translated the WHO/Europe guidance for sentinel influenza surveillance and CDC's international influenza assessment tool into each country language to be used for the assessments.

- Organized influenza assessment workshops in every country.
- Prepared influenza surveillance guidelines for each country.
- Prepared SARI surveillance protocols for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Prepared ILI surveillance protocols for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Updated ILI and SARI surveillance protocols in Albania, Croatia, Serbia, and Romania.
- Developed training packages for ILI and SARI surveillance in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Conducted field assessments of influenza surveillance in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo.\*
- Identified ILI and SARI sentinel sites and trained staff in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Identified and revised ILI and SARI sentinel sites in Albania and Croatia.
- Provided sentinel sites with all necessary sample collection and transportation materials.
- Albania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia submitted virological and epidemiological data electronically to The European Surveillance System (TESSy) on weekly basis.
- Prepared and disseminated surveillance reports to healthcare professionals at sentinel sites in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo.\*
- Monitored sentinel sites in each country.
- Organized visits for influenza surveillance coordinators between the following countries: Serbia and Macedonia visited Romania; Kosovo\* visited Slovenia; and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina visited Serbia.
- Prepared template in SEEFflu, a web-based influenza information system.

## LABORATORY

Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia all have NICs, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo\* have national influenza laboratories, but do not have NICs. All activities are aimed to strengthen the capacities of influenza diagnosis (RT-PCR) in influenza laboratories across the region and to start establishing capacities for influenza virus isolation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*

Essential kits and some equipment on RT-PCR testing were procured for all countries and training on RT-PCR testing was provided in all countries. A self-assessment influenza laboratory diagnosis and quality assurance tool developed by WHO was translated and used by all countries and the results were provided to SECID, WHO, and CDC. Laboratory SOPs for influenza diagnosis by RT-PCR were prepared in all countries and, based on that and NIC requirements, country plans were developed and essential equipment for virus isolation was procured for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*

### LABORATORY ACTIVITIES

- Translated and used WHO's Influenza laboratory self-assessment tool in all countries.
- Developed and implemented laboratory SOPs for RT-PCR in all countries.
- Developed plans for obtaining NIC recognition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Developed sample collection and transportation SOPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Translated WHO Biosafety guidelines for use in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo,\* and Bulgaria.
- Improved influenza diagnostics in all countries, with a 35% improvement in Albania.
- Organized training visits for influenza laboratory specialists from Serbia and Macedonia to visit Romania; and Kosovo\* to visit Slovenia.
- Influenza laboratory specialists from Macedonia and Kosovo\* participated in a training at CDC.
- Procured and distributed RT-PCR essential kits according to the needs of all the countries.

- Procured essential equipment for virus isolation for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*

## PREPAREDNESS

Pandemic preparedness plans are in place in all SEE countries and they were used during the 2009 influenza pandemic. All countries have also adopted legislation to allow for implementation of pandemic plans and have performed training and established structures to coordinate pandemic preparedness and response. Discussion around revising and updating preparedness plans was started in all countries during influenza assessment workshops. Romania and Croatia started the process of evaluating the existing framework for preparedness and terms of reference and began revision of pandemic preparedness plans. Joint human and animal workshops were also organized to discuss integrated surveillance and pandemic preparedness.

### PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

- Organized an influenza pandemic preparedness planning workshop in Croatia and Romania.
- Organized animal and human surveillance workshops in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo.\*
- Established joint protocols and activities for and human and animal influenza surveillance in Bulgaria and Croatia.

## TRAINING

- Trained approximately 400 health care workers from ILI and SARI sites.
- Trained and retrained all ILI site health care workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Trained and retrained all SARI site health care workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.\*
- Retrained all SARI and ILI sentinel sites in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia.

## INFLUENZA VACCINE ACTIVITIES

Influenza vaccination is not mandatory for any group of people in SEE countries, although a certain number of people from high risk groups are covered by health insurance and vaccinated free of charge. At this time there are no data to evaluate the impact of vaccination policies or burden of disease.

However, Albania participated in a workshop organized by WHO EURO to evaluate the burden of disease and impact of vaccination policies. Albania also introduced for the first time a national program and guidelines to vaccinate health workers where a national coverage of 70% was achieved.



*\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*