

VBORNET Annual General Meeting and Steering Committee Meeting 2010

INTRODUCTION

The VBORNET Project started in 2009 with the Kick Off Meeting held in ECDC's Stockholm HQ in September. The Project's major objective is to establish a European Network of entomological and public health specialists to assist ECDC in its preparedness activities on vector borne diseases (VBD). This will be achieved in three steps:

Establishment of the *VBORNET consortium* who will develop the *VBORNET network* and the *VBORNET inventory*.

Establishment of a *VBORNET network* of contributing members who are representative of the wide range of vector-borne disease related research and public health (PH) activities currently ongoing in Europe. One of its main tasks in year one will be to set the basis for Pan-European administrative unit distribution maps of the major arthropod vectors of diseases. Subscription is on a voluntary basis;

Establishment of a *VBORNET inventory* which aims at making an exhaustive catalog of VBD and related public health (PH) activities (and expertise) in Europe.

Given the diversity of topics related to VBD in Europe the *VBORNET network* cannot be seen as a static group, but will be in permanent evolution, with *VBORNET network members* consulted from the *VBORNET expert list* at any stage according to priorities and technical needs.

VBORNET consists of four Work Packages:

WP1 Information Management and Coordination, focussing on establishing the network, acquiring and mapping available distribution data, and identifying gaps

WP2 comprises the *Science Watch*, providing regular electronic newsletters. discussing recent publications and news as well as a series of special issues on each vector group; and *Ad Hoc Technical Advice* to ECDC on vector borne diseases in Europe.

WP3 Vector Distribution and Surveillance, which is establishing and maintaining databases on vector distributions and surveillance in Europe.

WP4 Strategic Consultation Group which concentrates on public health aspects of vector surveillance and control in Europe

The first VBORNET Annual General Meeting, attended by some 60 of the VBORNET members, was held in June 2010 at the ITM premises in Antwerp to report on the first years activities in a series of presentations as set out in the Agenda provided in the Annex at the end of this document. These will be provided for general dissemination to network members via the project website given in the document

footer. The AGM was followed by a Steering Committee meeting which considered issues raised at the AGM, and identified activities for the coming year. The conclusions of these meetings are presented in the following pages.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETINGS

A number of specific issues were raised, and a series of activities were identified that should be implemented during the following year.

The issues raised regarding WP1 mainly concerned modifications or additions to the existing VBORNET tool, in particular relating to validation and data sharing protocols and the need for more structured information about network contributors, VBD experts and their activities. Details of which additional themes should be included in the database and the potential for further analyses of the distribution databases needed were also considered.

The provision of technical guidelines, opinion papers and training related activities was identified as a main focus of future activities within WP2

The main recommendations for WP3 concerned the potential expansion of the vector species and epidemiological data to be incorporated within the VBORNET Tool databases

WP4 conclusions centred on continuing to compile a Public Health resources database, using a number of different approaches, as well as looking at ways to make vector related information more easily accessible to PH bodies.

WP1: COORDINATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Existing Outputs

The current priority to get the building blocks of network membership, data acquisition and storage working received general approval. It was confirmed that historical data should be maintained, with the active involvement of experts that is needed to interpret records that are outdated

Data validation.

The validation of records needs to be more systematic, and made transparent to contributors. In order to achieve this the VBORNET consortium should provide a clear validation process, initially based on the experience gained with mosquito mapping, and then circulated to other focal points for improvement and thence to ECDC for comment prior to finalisation

Data Sharing

NUTS will help to ease data sharing but there is clear need for protecting ownership. A difference exists between reporting 'first presence' and continued observation. Publishing data in short communications might speed up the process of data sharing. Contributors should be able to flag that they 'have data but not for sharing at this point'.

There is a need for the consortium to establish clear data sharing rules and protocols to which contributors can agree when they provide data.

Expert and Contributor Database

Databases of VBORNET contributors and VBD experts should be designed and established containing details of at least main subject and research topic. Where possible all entries should be georeferenced and thus mappable. The database should be available initially as an intranet resource with the possibility of integrating with other similar publicly accessible databases (EDEN, ENIVD) in the future.

A mappable directory/database of ongoing and planned field activities should be designed and network members invited to contribute.

Additional Data Themes and Analyses

There should, in due course, be a bibliographic database with links to the pubmed/doi reference, and possibly including grey literature

The current facility for adding 'comments and notes or ancillary information' could be expanded in due course, *e.g.* to allow limiting factor information to be included

Modelling

There are a number of ways to enhance and disseminate the basic VBORNET NUTS level vector distribution maps, in order to improve their accessibility to Public Health professionals. One which should be examined is the production of continental risk maps using the methodology originally proposed under VECMAP (An integrated spatial tool and service for modelling the distribution of mosquito vectors of disease) "Pan-European mosquito distribution tools".

Links to other networks

Establishing and maintaining links to other networks is a priority

WP2: SCIENCE WATCH AND TECHNICAL ADVICE

Newsletters

Newsletters are important and should be maintained, with the proviso that comments on published articles should reflect the opinion of ECDC

Provision of Guidelines and Opinion Papers

Technical guidelines, accompanied by strategic guidelines from ECDC, could be provided in several aspects relevant to VBORNET activities: *e.g.* Sampling strategies, or assessment of risk map methods and outputs. These should be identified during the next year for implementation in due course

Training

In addition, pointers to training materials, details of existing courses on medical entomology and the identification of qualified training personnel/institutions should be established within the project lifetime. In particular there is a clear need for Entomological training through VBORNET network and epidemiological training for VBORNET issues.

WP3 DISTRIBUTION AND SURVEILLANCE

Species Recorded

The meeting concluded that the acquisition of distribution information is on track, and as it is a work in progress, gaps are not yet fully evident. The list of vectors which may yield sufficient data should be re-assessed. To keep realistic targets, new species should only be added when they become PH hazard, and only if no other available networks cover them.

Regarding mosquitoes, the need to include nuisance species was discussed but no clear recommendations were reached. The list of potential additions is enormous, but the only species 'universally' agreed for inclusion soon was *Anopheles plumbeus*.

Regarding ticks, it was agreed to establish a collaboration and exchange with EFSA who compiled/ collected a large amount of tick data from the animal health perspective.

Additional distribution data requirements.

The need for vector competence information was discussed but no clear recommendations were made except for the suggestion that the topic should be discussed again in the future.

Abundance measures may be desirable in addition to primary presence/absence (P/A) data, but only if they can be standardised, which is not yet feasible. Data on P/A may not be sufficient to bridge the gap between entomologists and Public Health, so the inclusion of trend information (cfr OIE) or indicators of parameters such as prevalence (cfr ENIVD) may be useful

Use of Grid and point distribution data in addition to administrative unit (NUTS) information was considered: the VBORNET tool currently allows contributors to submit data at NUTS level and to indicate that point data are available. The inclusion of fully georeferenced point data into the VBORNET system will be possible in due course. The use of grid data is not technically feasible, though NUTS may be replaced by more standard size units in due course.

WP4 STRATEGIC CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Types of Information

Making a list of Public Health resources is the main current priority: political realities mean that formal approaches to competent bodies through focal points is the most appropriate approach at the moment.

Additional PH Information needed within the Project Lifetime

Once the extent of formal PH information available to the networks has been established, more wide ranging federal/local or informal PH, GP and reference based networks should all be included in a PH database as there is not much overlap between these categories. It may be useful to look at systems for recording PH resources elsewhere (e.g. FSU and the Americas) for additional examples.

Overview of Overseas Territories needed to identify priorities to be addressed in future years

There is a need to identify what additional PH data (*e.g.* GP collected bite rates), might be added to the VBORNET PH databases.

There is a strong need to establish a list of PH expert definitions for VBORNET topics

Additional PH Priorities

A number of potential Public health activities not yet identified as VBORNET priorities were discussed and identified. These included:

Assisting ECDC in lobbying governments to implement monitoring programmes

The provision of specific recommendations and action plans for both routine and outbreak vector control

The definition of vector surveillance and distribution information that is most relevant to Public Health bodies thereby establishing how best to use VBORNET outputs and products in a PH context

VBORNET

“European Network for Arthropod Vector Surveillance for Human Public Health”

First Annual General Meeting

Institute for Tropical Medicine
Antwerp, June 1st – 3rd 2010



VBORNET AGM - Antwerp (BE), 2-3 June 2010

AGM Agenda

June 1st

AM Arrival delegates

PM AGM Opening and introductory network session

Opening by ITM Director

- 14h00 - 14h30: VBORNET within ECDC strategy *Herve Zeller*
14h30 - 15h30: WP1 – VBORNET coordination objectives: achievements and suggestions for future activities *Guy Hendrickx*
15h30 – 16h00: WP2.2 – Ad Hoc technical Support: objectives, achievements and suggestions for future activities *Jolyon Medlock*
16h30 – 17h00: WP3 –Vector Distributions: objectives, achievements and suggestions for future activities. *Veerle Versteirt*
17h30 – 18h00: WP4 – Public Health: objectives, achievements and suggestions for future activities *Joke van der Giessen*

June 2nd AM VBORNET AGM public sessions

- 8h30 – 10h00 – Mosquitoes:
Invasive mosquitoes in Europe. *Francis Schaffner*:
MODIRISK from spatial data to mosquito models *Eva Declercq*:
10h30 – 12h30 – Ticks:
Ornithodoros ticks around the Mediterranean: *Laurence Vial*:
13h30 – 15h00 – Phlebotomines
Current data on phlebotomine distributions in Turkey. *Bülent Alten and Yusuf Ozbel*
historical phlebotomine data for Europe: *Bülent Alten*
15h00 – 16h00 – Other vectors
The importance of other disease vectors: *Pierre Edouard Fournier*
16h30 – 18h00: Public health
Introduction: *Marieta Braks*
Presentation PH database for the Mediterranean: *Cecilia Campion*

June 3rd

AM VBORNET AGM concluding network session

- 8h30 – 9h00: the VECMAP project
9h00 – 9h30: EDENext project
9h30 – 10h00: ENIVD network
10h00 – 10h30: Coffee break
10h30 – 12h30: Concluding discussions
- Identified knowledge gaps:
 - § Vector distributions
 - § VBD Public health
 - VBORNET objectives for year 2
 - VBORNET links with other projects: ECDC-E3, EDENext, other ECDC VBD calls

PM VBORNET SC meeting (13h30 – 16h00)¹

- Wrapping-up the first VBORNET AGM
- Remaining activities for year 1
- The modeling issue
- Integration of VBORNET within ECDC
- ICT issue

¹ The SC meeting is only open to the VBORNET Steering Committee members.