



the EURO-URHIS update

EURO-URHIS NEWSLETTER 3 – OCTOBER 2008

Dear Friends


The EURO-URHIS project is now at an end. We thank you for all your support in completing this work. All details of the project can be found at www.urhis.eu

Objectives

The general objectives of EURO-URHIS were to develop a comprehensive urban health information and knowledge system to:

1. Help to identify and prioritise urban health problems
2. Enable the monitoring of the effects of actions taken to address them
3. Ensure timely access to information
4. Contribute in building advocacy, communication and education strategies
5. Use standardized methodology for data collection, processing and dissemination, allowing transnational comparisons and time trend analysis

EURO-URHIS Update



Initial literature reviews, summarising previous work on identifying urban health indicators as well as on how to define urban areas and populations, provided excellent information. Urban health appeared from the literature to be an important problem, with a number of Public Health issues specific to the urban setting in addition to those confronting populations everywhere. Urban health can be defined as public health specific to cities. Despite a number of initiatives on the development of health indicators on which this project could build, no indicators for urban health were found to exist previously. The definition of an Urban Area was very variable in the literature, and our conclusion was that we had to use whatever definition was current according to each local setting. Based on the literature review, a draft list of 45 urban health indicators was created, and questionnaires were developed and sent to those responsible for health data collection or analysis in each country of the EU, to assess availability of these indicators. **Responses were retrieved from 60 European Urban Areas in 30 countries.** A large majority of Urban Areas returned questionnaires of near 100 pages filled with invaluable information about local health indicator availability, definitions and sources. The local respondents were painstaking, conscientious and hard-working. An amazing variety of comparable health indicators are available in the 30 countries. No clear patterns of indicator availability emerged – availability does not seem to depend on country size, location or EU status. The responses to the questionnaires were

transferred to a database, and country reports fed back to each country. A further detailed examination of each of the proposed indicators was made, leading to the proposed final set of indicators to be used. **This has produced a set of 39 Urban Health Indicators, together with their definitions,** which can form the basis of an Urban Health Indicator system. In addition, a number of gaps were identified with the need for the development work required to produce further indicators of relevance to urban health. A close study of the process of urban health data collection was also performed. This highlighted a number of issues involved with the identification of data sources, many of which were common across European countries and are therefore likely to relate to other research on comparable topics. However, despite the existence of these barriers, and some problems with the international comparability of questions to elicit information, data collection was completed for many of the indicators. Therefore the project has succeeded in identifying both the utility of using some Urban Health Indicators and the availability of data, and has gained an enhanced knowledge of how urban health data are used and routinely collected across Europe. In addition, through the work of a separate part of the project, we identified a number of ways in which health indicators may be presented to enhance their usefulness to health policymakers. A web site and three newsletters have been produced to assist in the dissemination of the results of the project.

EURO-URHIS Conference

A final conference for peer reviewers and policy makers, was attended by more than 100 people. The conference identified ways in which the indicators might be incorporated into an EU wide system of urban health indicators. Feedback from the conference showed that all delegates felt the conference had increased awareness of urban health indicators, 89% felt the findings of the EURO-URHIS project would be helpful to policy makers and 86% felt that there was now enough evidence to support inclusion of urban health in all policies. The EURO-URHIS indicators were deemed by all delegates to be useful and not requiring revision despite the need for further development work on additional indicators and methods of implementation. Many different strategies for the implementation of UHIs were discussed through future projects including EURO-URHIS 2, continuing the EURO-URHIS network and formation of a sub-national working group.

In conclusion,

EURO-URHIS has demonstrated that urban health and its measurement is of major relevance and importance for Public Health across Europe. The current study has constructed an initial system of European Urban Health Indicators to meet the objectives of the project, but has also clearly demonstrated that further development work is required. The importance and value of examining urban health indicators has been confirmed, and the scene has been set for further studies on this topic.

If you would like more information on the EURO-URHIS projects and other initiatives following on from the project, please email arpana.verma@manchester.ac.uk

The EURO-URHIS project will be presented at:

1. WHO Healthy Cities Conference, Zagreb, 15th-18th October 2008
www.healthycitieszagreb2008.com
2. International Conference on Urban Health, Vancouver, 28th-31st October 2008
www.icuh2008.com
3. Urban Health session at EUPHA/ASPHER conference, Lisbon, 5th- 8th November 2008
http://www.eupha.org/site/upcoming_conference.php