



EURO-URHIS 2 NEWSLETTER

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WHAT IS EURO-URHIS 2?

EURO-URHIS 2 is a research project, funded by the EU and DG Research, on urban health indicators.

Still doesn't make any sense?

To put it into context, in 2008 it was estimated that for the first time ever, more than half of the world's population live in urban areas, with three quarters of those in developed countries living in cities. In Central and Western Europe this figure rises to 80% of the population living in urban areas.

With so many people in these places, the conditions of urban living are becoming increasingly vital when considering the health of the world's populations as a whole.

Why pay specific attention to urban health from the point of view of public health?

Urban populations are characterised by a large diversity in social economic status, cultural and ethnic background, family constitution and sexual orientation. Specific vulnerable groups like migrant populations, homeless people and drug users are clearly over-represented in urban populations. This translates into diverse health problems in an increasingly urbanised population with rapid movement in and out of the urban area. Therefore, there needs to be specific approaches for health promotion, care, treatment and cure to ensure health gain of the urban population.

The European Urban Health Indicator System 2 (or EURO-

URHIS 2 for short) project commenced on 1st January 2009, following on from EURO-URHIS which developed a network of 60 urban areas across Europe. The EURO-URHIS initiative sought to find availability of many health indicators across Europe, and to describe some features of health that, whilst not specific only to urban situations, have a major impact on the health of urban residents.

By interviewing health experts in these areas alongside an extensive literature review, information on data availability and the nature of European Union urban health was developed. The European Community Health Indicator (ECHI) long-list was used as a starting point. The end result was a list of 39 health indicators that could be tested across some or all of the cities participating in the project. The project was a starting point, and concluded that more research was required in order to build an effective health indicator system.

EURO-URHIS 2 takes this work further by developing instruments to collect data at urban area, through health interview survey, routinely available sources of information and consultation with public health policy makers in each participating city.

The project is managed by the University of Manchester, and is supported by partners from many different countries (see left). It consists of ten work packages, each led by a member of the team, and will culminate in a conference in Amsterdam to report the findings.

Urban Area Data Collection from **30** cities in **12** European countries and Vietnam

MEET THE TEAM



PROJECT COORDINATOR:
ARPANA VERMA

- Arpana is a Senior Lecturer in Public Health at the University of Manchester
- She has set up the Manchester Urban Collaboration on Health (MUCH)
- She is President of the urban health proposed section for EUPHA (see www.eupha.org for more details)
- Her research interests include health protection projects, blood borne viruses, infection control, respiratory medicine and health services research
- For more information see www.urhis.eu

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WHERE ARE WE UP TO AND WHAT IS THE MAIN FOCUS NOW?

The starting point for EURO-URHIS 2 was the set of urban health indicators recommended by the EURO-URHIS 1 project. The team looked at what information they would need to collect to be able to draw conclusions. They then identified which information should be collected from health departments and which by surveying a random sample of people from an urban area population. The bias of these methods, both existing data and surveys has now been identified, addressed and minimised.

The main area of focus at the moment is producing the data collection tools. This involves looking at the ethical issues of collecting data, issues with response rates and the physical tools themselves. This is a very important process, as the tools for data collection need to be effective; there should be no queries with the results due to

inefficiencies with the tools or methods used.

At the moment, the team is working on four different data collection tools:

1. Identification of an instrument, based on EURO-URHIS 1 findings, designed to identify routinely collected data relevant to urban health indicators; this will be used for such data collection in at least 20 urban areas.

2. A questionnaire on health policies and the main interventions, again to be completed by a minimum of 20 urban areas.

3. A questionnaire, including areas of data not readily available other than from individuals themselves (such as lifestyle, environment, self perceived health), to be completed by random samples of the adult populations in at

least 10 urban areas.

4. A questionnaire enquiring into areas similar to those above, but for completion by 15 year olds.

And now, with the tools in the final stages of design, plans are being made for piloting. This is to ensure that any issues with reliability, repeatability and reproducibility are addressed so that the tools can be amended if required.

The leader of this work package is Dr Christopher Birt, a public health physician, employed by the University of Liverpool and Sefton Primary Care Trust. He is working closely with all team members in different countries to make sure that the tools are relevant in all urban areas in which they will be used.

The tools will be finalised soon and the pilot studies will commence in August 2009, with full data collection to start in 2010.

Objectives

What do we hope to achieve through EURO-URHIS 2?

- * To collect data at urban area level
- * To provide tools for evidence based policy
- * To develop methods for cross-sectional and longitudinal assessment for urban population health, including all relevant determinants of health
- * To validate these tools and methods by using existing population-based registries and databases
- * To apply the tools in the field and ensure they are easy and intuitive to use by policy makers

Significant Events

- Minutes from the meeting in Oslo are on www.urhis.eu
- Pilot studies of the data collection tools has commenced
- Urban area boundary study has been completed
- Training workshop 1 was held on 7 - 10 September 2009 in Liverpool, UK
- Training workshop 2 to be held in Maribor, Slovenia 19th–22nd January 2010
- Urban Health Workshops and presentations at EUPHA 2009 conference in Lodz, Poland (www.eupha.org)
- The 11th International Hepatitis C Conference, 16th November 2009, Manchester, UK (www.hepc09.org.uk)

The Urhis team at Dusseldorf



Plans for after data collection - Data will be analysed in various ways (including city profiles, ecological analyses, aggregate health measures, population impact measures) and will be presented in reports, scientific papers, and on an interactive website with maps. If you have any specific questions, please contact eurourhis2@manchester.ac.uk

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