



In this number

Sixth combined
newsletter **INSIGHT**
& **BIOSAFE**

From The
Coordinator

In The Spotlight

From The Coordinator



The **INSIGHT** project is coming to its end. The final **INSIGHT** workshop will take place on **October 15 and 16** in the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will, as member state representatives, receive a formal invitation by mail. You can pre- register for this workshop by sending an email to claudine.coenen@nvi-vaccin.nl. In this workshop we will discuss the 'State of the Art' in European emergency vaccination policies. (including which relevant diseases Europe needs to be targeting in the future, what we can learn from SARS (a small preview is given in the text box to the right) , pandemic influenza, smallpox, anthrax and other (re)merging infectious diseases like West Nile virus infections and Dengue fever). We further plan to present the critical points in emergency vaccination and how we as a network of public health institutes would like to see the future of emergency vaccination in Europe. We will show why we feel that an emergency vaccination platform is necessary. Next to this we will discuss whether strategic planning at the EU level is possible, feasible and desirable?

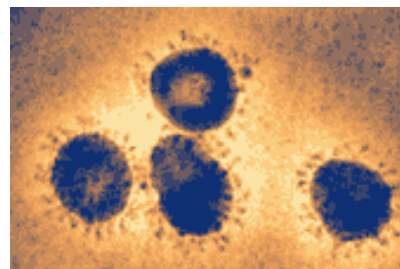
In the **BIOSAFE** project we are, as your may know, constructing a database with information on all the relevant infectious agents (bacteria, viruses and toxins) which may be used in a bioterroristic attack. This database contains the virulence factors or disease potential, the methods for detection, the host pathogen interactions, vaccine design, public health measures and available therapeutic interventions per infectious agent. This database is of course not freely accessible for everybody because it contains information which also can be misused by bioterrorists. **BIOSAFE** therefore compiled a 'Code of Practice' to deal with the resulting problems. In the 'In The Spotlight' sections you can read more about the BIOSAFE code of practice, which may be useful for other EU projects facing the same problems.

Kind regards,
Ben van der Zeijst

News flash

Lessons Learned: - Modern History – The case of SARS

The paper 'Globalization and Disease' published in Asian Economic Papers by Lee and McKibbin in 2004 aims to provide an assessment of the global economic impacts of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) as well to provide a more comprehensive approach to estimating the global consequences of major disease outbreaks. In the 6 months after the first outbreak SARS spread to at least 28 countries. Most studies on the economic effects of epidemics focused on the disease-associated medical costs, but the most significant real costs of SARS have been generated by changes in spending behavior by households and companies in affected countries. This study estimates the costs of the SARS outbreak by focusing on the impacts on consumption and investment behavior through changes in the costs and risk of doing business. Due to increased economic interdependence, these changes in behavior have wide-ranging consequences for the world economy and can lead to economic losses well in excess of the traditional estimates of the cost of disease. The impact of SARS on the economies of China and Hong Kong, as estimated by their model, was large; Hongkong lost 2.63 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and China lost 1.05 percent of the GDP. As the world becomes more integrated due to globalization, the cost of a communicable disease like SARS is expected to rise. See www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/0520development_lee/20030520.pdf for the whole article.



Source: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/SARS/

News flash

Lessons Learned: – The Case of Chikungunya

The mosquito-borne disease Chikungunya has caused massive outbreaks for at least half a century, but they happened in developing countries and therefore few researchers took an interest, according to the article of Martin Enserink in Science. Not anymore, because in 2005 and 2006 the disease had finally struck a rich country. Chikungunya virus affected 40% of the 785,000 head population of La Reunion (a French department). Chikungunya causes high fevers, rash – sometimes with blisters- and excruciating painful swelling of the joints in fingers, wrists and ankles, which can last for months or even years. The explosion of the disease was caused because the virus was able use the "Asian Tiger" mosquito as a vector due to a single point mutation! This mosquito is also spreading fast across Europe and the United States. Currently there is no cure available against the disease and that is why France is making vaccine development a priority. The article mentions the start in 2008 of safety trials of an old US Army vaccine against the disease. The question which also rose was whether regulatory authorities will allow the use of a vaccine produced decades ago and deep- frozen ever since. Please see <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/318/5858/1860> for the whole article.

In the spotlight: BIOSAFE Code of Practice

“Europeans regard terrorism as one of the key challenges the European Union is facing today. The attacks in Madrid, London, New York, and elsewhere in the world made it clear that terrorism is a global threat. Terrorists target our security, the values of our democratic societies and the basic rights and freedoms of our citizens. Terrorists may resort to non-conventional means such as biological weapons or materials” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007). Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations stressed “Bioterrorism is especially under-addressed and in acute need of new thinking” (Uniting Against Terrorism, 2006). Preventing bioterrorism requires joined international efforts corresponding to the specific nature of the threat. Currently Europe lacks an integrated approach because most of the efforts tend to be at a national level. The BIOSAFE project aims to underpin an integrated European approach.



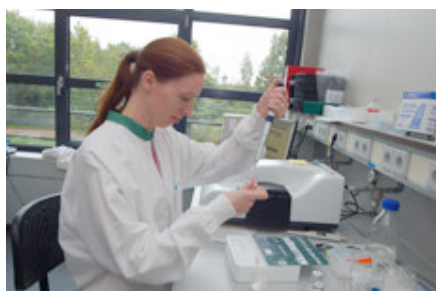
More detailed information on the BIOSAFE project can be found in the text boxes below. At the start of the BIOSAFE project it became evident to the BIOSAFE experts that the data collected within the BIOSAFE project may potentially also be of use to bioterrorists. The collected data therefore should be protected from being misused by bioterrorists. In this sense BIOSAFE has and will yield so-called “dual use” information. The term “dual-use” was introduced to reflect that the situation should be prevented that the identification and information of new pathogens or potential biologic weapons for biosecurity purposes will be used to develop these biologic weapons.

So far various initiatives are taking place on National, European and Global level to raise awareness among scientists that the information they are collecting could be misused by others. One of these initiatives is the Green Paper of the Commission of the European Communities, 2007. Another initiative is the “Code Of Conduct On Biosecurity” of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science, 2007. The BIOSAFE project took it to the next level and constructed a concrete, easy to use, Code of Practice. The BIOSAFE Code of Practice contains practical rules to protect information present or exchanged in publications, personnel, meetings and email. This information may be of use to other European projects that intend to develop their own Code of Practice.

Basis for the BIOSAFE Code of Practice

“The Council Decision adopting the Council’s security regulations dealing with the issue on “EU Classified Information” served as a platform upon which the BIOSAFE project based its code of practice. The Decision of the Council on *EU Classified Information* distinguishes 4 different categories of classified information:

1. EU TOP SECRET (*shall be applied only to information and material the unauthorized disclosure of which could cause exceptionally grave prejudice to the essential interests of the EU or one or more Member States*)
2. EU SECRET (*shall be applied only to information and material the unauthorized disclosure of which could seriously harm the essential interests of the EU or of one or more Member States*)
3. EU CONFIDENTIAL (*shall be applied to information and material the unauthorized disclosure of which could harm the essential interests of the EU or of one or more of its Member States*)
4. EU RESTRAINT (*shall be applied to information and material the unauthorized disclosure of which could be disadvantageous to the interests of the EU or of one or more of its Member States*)



To decide which classification is best suitable, it is important to keep in mind that over-classification should be avoided, that a classification should be chosen which suits the purpose of the confidentiality and, furthermore, a category is chosen which enables a workable ‘Code of Practice’. The highest classification EU TOP SECRET would not be workable and would require very special technical implementations. Documents marked with the lowest classification being EU RESTRAINT do not enjoy the same “protection” in the sense that they are not in principle excluded from public access. The members therefore had to choose between EU SECRET and EU CONFIDENTIAL. In doing so, the BIOSAFE members have agreed upon the classification EU CONFIDENTIAL in cases in which the provided information in their expert opinion seems sensitive.

On the next page you will find the BIOSAFE Code of Practice.

Code of Practice

Regarding documents which are regarded EU CONFIDENTIAL by the BIOSAFE consortium:

- The EU Classification shall appear at the top and bottom center of each page
- Each document shall bear a reference number and a date
- All annexes shall be listed on the first page.

Personnel

Access to EU CONFIDENTIAL information will be authorized only for persons in possession of the appropriate security clearance. The clearance of personnel will be the responsibility of the official's employer. The employer will be obliged to issue a "security certificate" showing the level of classified information to which the cleared person may have access to, as well as the date of expiry. The Coordinator of the project will contact the employers.

Meetings and minutes

- Only persons cleared by the Coordinator or Technical Project Manager of the BIOSAFE project can attend BIOSAFE meetings.
- Minutes of BIOSAFE meetings, conference calls or web-conferences which are marked classified, may only be shared with persons cleared by the Coordinator of Technical Project Manager.

EU CONFIDENTIAL mail

- Should be transmitted in double envelopes. The inner envelope shall be marked with the appropriate EU security classification as well as, if possible, full particulars of recipient's job title and address. Under no circumstances shall the classification be marked on the outer envelope.
- Conveyed from one partner to another by registered mail.

Using E-Mail or sharing documents

- Email should be encoded with an encryption program like;
- Chiasmus for Windows
- Alternatively: The encryption key of your own emailing system.

The objectives of BIOSAFE are:

- Strengthening the co-ordination of research in the field of virulence factors.
- Identification of specific virulence factors that may be used in (engineered) biological warfare organisms, in order to detect these engineered organisms and break their virulence pathway.
- Identification of new ways and methods to control outbreaks of disease caused by biological agents and to stop further spread of the disease, including identification of research requirement for the development of new cures and rapid detection methods.

BIOSAFE aims to enhance the capability of public health- and civil protection authorities to respond adequately to the deliberate releases of biological agents, e.g. bacteria, viruses and toxins, by terrorists. In pursuit of this aim BIOSAFE will bring together, interpret and analyze existing expertise on virulence factors of those pathogens and toxins that may be used in acts of bioterrorism, by means of the establishment of a European-wide network and a database information system. This database will be complemented by information on the disinfectants for these biologicals and on drugs, antisera and vaccines to stop terrorist induced infection outbreaks. Through the combination and interpretation of data collected in this project, BIOSAFE will also identify new ways for possible intervention.