

VBORNET - European Network for Arthropod Vector Surveillance for Human Public Health

Editorial

The objective of VBORNET is to establish a European Network of entomological and public health specialists in order to assist ECDC in its preparedness activities on vector borne diseases (VBD). This will be achieved in three steps:

1. Establishment of the *VBORNET consortium* who will develop the *VBORNET network* and the *VBORNET inventory*.
2. 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;
3. 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* activated from the *VBORNET inventory* at any stage according to priorities and technical needs.

What is the value for you to become a VBORNET network member?

As an active network member contributing information to VBORNET you will have access to the VBORNET raw VBD data and resources, have the possibility to contribute to VBD/PH priority setting in Europe as a member of expert panels (e.g. annual VBORNET meeting) and be listed as an official VBORNET network member.

How will the VBD community as a whole benefit from VBORNET?

VBORNET aims to make available through internet regularly updated vector distribution maps of the major arthropod vectors of diseases in Europe, inventory of VBD and related PH expertise, publications, surveillance and control activities, and a monthly newsletter with news items and events. The VBORNET webpage and platform will be very soon available.

What is VBORNET expecting from you as a network member?

The VBORNET network is looking for VBD experts who are interested in data sharing and networking. At this early stage VBORNET will focus on acquiring baseline data on confirmed vector presence at various administrative scales (NUTS 1-2-3) and quality control of the various VBORNET database inputs. VBORNET network members can be representatives of other existing VBD networks.

How can you become a member of the VBORNET network?

Contact the VBORNET with a short e-mail confirming your interest in joining the network and how you can contribute to strengthen the network at: vbornet@ecdc.europa.eu .

Looking forward to a successful collaboration!

The VBORNET consortium.

The VBORNET work-packages

Four work-packages (WP) have been implemented to conduct the various VBORNET activities. Each are described in detail in this document and a scheme with the interrelationships is given below (Fig.1).

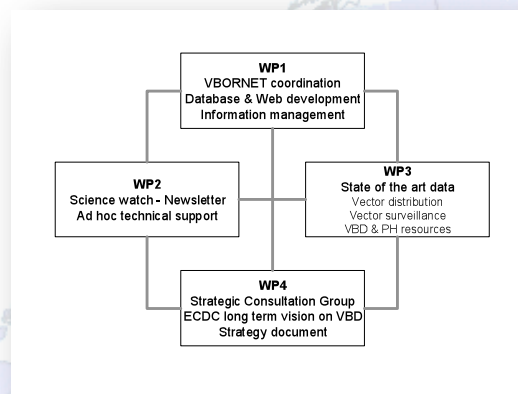


Figure 1 - The VBORNET WP structure.

For each WP a coordinator has been nominated who is in charge of achieving the objectives of its WP and communicating with the other WP's to ensure all activities are in phase. This is also replicated at ECDC level. For WP 3 and 4 respectively additional vector and public health focal points have been identified. Coordination provides the necessary administration and management back-up, communication platforms and ICT tools. The VBORNET Steering Committee includes ECDC, the VBORNET Secretariat, the WP leaders and the vector and public health focal points (Fig. 2)



Figure 2 – Participants to the VBORNET kick-off meeting at ECDC in Stockholm: (1) Francis Schaffner, (2) Annick Lenglet, (3) Lara Payne, (4) Renaud Lancelot, (5) Hervé Zeller, (6) William Wint, (7) Wim Van Bortel, (8) Didier Fontenille, (9) Pierre-Edouard Fournier, (10) Joke Van Der Giesen, (11) Jolyon Medlock, (12) Céline Gossner, (13) Katrin Leitmeyer, (14) Bulent Alten, (15) Guy Hendrickx, (16) Paolo Calistri, (17) Zdenek Hubalek, (18) Gert Olsson, (19) Evelyn Depoortere

Work-package 4

Strategic consultation group

Leader Joke Van der Giesen

Joke Van der Giesen, DVM, PhD, is a veterinary microbiologist with more than 15 years working experience. She is heading the Department of Animal and Vector related infections of the Laboratory of Zoonoses and Environmental Microbiology (LZO) at RIVM, Bilthoven (Netherlands). In VBORNET she will be in charge of developing the PH component of the VBORNET network and database.

The current link between vector networks and public health is often poorly established both at national level and in European networks. The main objective of this work-package therefore is to link vector and public health experts with the aims to:

- Define and develop priority strategic topics concerning the public health perspective of vector-borne diseases and vector surveillance in the EU.
- Develop a European strategy for the surveillance of the main human disease vectors with public health importance.
- Advise ECDC with technical strategic topics such as the clarification of current roles and responsibilities and the organizational framework in the EU for vector surveillance activities.
- Identify the current relevant public health issues and gaps for EU preparedness for vector-borne diseases.

During the first year the main aim will be to connect both vector and public health networks, disseminate a PH questionnaire on a country by country basis and write a first annual VBD related PH Strategy Document for ECDC. This WP will be organized by geographical regions based on the major European biomes: Northern Europe, Western Temperate Europe, Central Temperate Europe, the Mediterranean basin (includes North Africa), and Overseas (tropical) Europe. In addition to the WP leader who is in charge of Western Europe, four additional WP regional focal points have been identified:

- Northern EU focal point: Marika Hjertqvist is working as a public health epidemiologist at the epidemiology department of SMI, Stockholm (Sweden). She has more than five years working experience on the surveillance of VBD at the national level and is involved in several VBD related research projects with a focus on TBE and Lyme borreliosis.
- Central EU focal point: Zdenek Hubalek, Prof. RNDr. PhD. DSc., is principal researcher and laboratory head at the IVB, Brno (Czech Republic). He has over 40 years experience with research in the field of diseases with natural focality (arthropod-borne viruses and bacteria, tularaemia, mycoses, avian botulism) combined with studies on the ecology of vertebrate hosts and haematophagous vectors of these diseases.
- Mediterranean EU focal point: Renaud Lancelot, DVM, PhD is a chief officer in veterinary public health, French ministry of agriculture. He is working as the epidemiology team leader in the research unit "Control of emerging and exotic animal diseases", CIRAD, Montpellier (France). He has more than 20 years experience in the epidemiology of infectious animal diseases and zoonoses and is the coordinator of the European EDEN project on emerging, vector-borne diseases in a changing European environment.
- Overseas EU focal point: Didier Fontenille, PhD, is the leader of a team of 60 people working on Chagas' disease vectors, sandflies and mosquitoes at IRD, Montpellier (France). He is a medical entomologist with more than 25 years experience in the field of mosquito population biology, population genetics and control. He is coordinator or involved in several research programs on vector control in ultra peripheral territories of Europe, in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean.

Links with other ECDC led network will be implemented as VBORNET is setting up.

VBORNET Consortium Address List

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EC = Executive Committee; SC = Steering Committee; FP = Focal Point; PH = Public Health.

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³ Health Protection Agency

⁴ Institute for Tropical Medicine

⁵ National Institute for Public Health and the Environment

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