

OCTOBER 2023 EIOS NEWSLETTER

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DEAR READER,

With this final edition of the EIOS Newsletter for 2023, we are transporting you to Italy. Renowned for the Roman Empire, iconic architecture, and its delectable cuisine, its capital Rome will now forever be recognized as the birthplace of the first PHI Training Working Group! We will delve into the significance of this group for the EIOS initiative in the 'Spotlight' and acquaint you with the EIOS Italy Community in the 'Community Close-Up.'

Acknowledging that any initiative is only as robust as the individuals driving it, training holds a pivotal position within the EIOS initiative and takes center stage in this newsletter. Beyond the establishment of the PHI Working Group, we celebrated another significant milestone in September: the third EIOS Training of Trainers workshop, which was hosted at the WHO Pandemic Hub in Berlin. As the Hub commemorated its second anniversary, it continues evolving into an increasingly vital hub for global collaboration and action around collaborative surveillance. We have spotlighted some recent and upcoming events for you in this edition.

With sincere greetings,
The EIOS Core Team

SPOTLIGHT

New 'PHI Training' Working Group

During the March 2023 EIOS Coordination Group (CG) meeting, the necessity for better coordination, collaboration, and networking around Public Health Intelligence (PHI) training was once again underscored. Following meeting discussions, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) of Germany and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) agreed to take action and establish a working group (WG) on PHI Training.

Gathering other interested CG members around the topic, including representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), who graciously hosted the first meeting at their headquarters in Rome, as well as from WHO, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), and the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC), the WG first met from 26-28 September 2023. During this three day workshop, the group established their Terms of Reference and set key priorities to work on for the next 18 months. These include implementing the global PHI curriculum that is currently being developed, setting up a PHI trainers' network, and establishing PHI and training assessments.

The PHI Training WG is a great example of hands-on collaboration amongst EIOS CG members, showcasing the group's commitment to diligently representing the epidemic intelligence community and championing the vision of the EIOS Initiative:

A world where health threats are identified and responded to so early and rapidly that they have zero impact on lives and livelihoods.



PHI WG meeting. Rome, Italy. 26-28 September 2023. Photos: ©FAO.

Check out the composition of the EIOS Coordination Group on the EIOS website:
www.who.int/initiatives/eios

News from the EIOS Core Team

In the past quarter, we were able to take a huge leap forward with the development of the multi-year EIOS Expansion and Sustainability strategy. Together with the consulting firm SEEK Development, we successfully completed the diagnostic phase of the strategy process which included numerous consultations with a wide range of the initiative's key stakeholders, including the Coordination Group, the EIOS Core Team, as well as representatives from Member State communities and the Global EIOS Support Team. The next phase will comprise of mapping and assessing options for the initiative's sustainable expansion, which will form the basis for the strategic framework.

We would like to sincerely thank all those who have shared their vision for the initiative's expansion, and who continue to be part of the process!

Training Updates: Third EIOS ToT

The 2023 [EIOS Training of Trainers \(ToT\)](#) was hosted at the WHO Pandemic Hub in Berlin for the first time - an important milestone in the initiative's history! The ToT was conducted 11-15 September 2023, and welcomed over 30 participants from all around the globe. The ToT provided participants with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver EIOS system and public health intelligence (PHI) trainings, both crucial prerequisites to enhancing PHI across the global community of practice, and to purposefully drive EIOS expansion. ToT is a cornerstone in aligning the wider capacity-building and sustainability strategies of the EIOS initiative and the WHO Pandemic Hub.

In the spirit of collaboration, which characterizes the EIOS initiative, the ToT provided fertile soil for knowledge exchange and cooperation amongst participants. We look forward to seeing these connections flourish and lead to joint projects as well as co-delivering PHI and EIOS trainings worldwide. The training graduates have been welcomed to the Global EIOS Training Team, expanding it to almost 80 members.

Be the first one to [watch the video from the EIOS ToT](#)!



2023 EIOS ToT workshop, WHO Pandemic Hub. Photos: ©WHO/ Alfonso Moral.

PAHO/WHO: Uruguay on board

In August 2023, the WHO Regional Office for the Americas (PAHO/WHO) with the support of the Uruguay Country Office, facilitated a training for participants from the Uruguay Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Ministry of the Environment.



EIOS system training in Uruguay. Photo: © WHO/PAHO.

In Q3/2023, over 760 new sources from the Americas were identified and added to the EIOS system, thanks to the dedicated regional Sources Coordinator, who gathered input from EIOS communities across the Region.

WHO EURO: Response to current emergencies

The WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO) was thrilled to welcome Spain and Armenia as part of the EIOS initiative in September and October 2023.

Amidst global political instabilities, WHO EURO initiated enhanced EBS activities for the Armenia Refugee Response, with an interest in monitoring potential impacts on the health care system and infectious diseases affecting displaced populations. To aid in this, the EIOS Core Team and the Armenia WHO Country Office are strengthening relevant sources and categories within the EIOS system.

WHO EMRO: Welcoming Somalia

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) recently conducted an EIOS training for the Somalia Ministry of Health's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) team, as part of an extensive 10-day program on the WHO emergency management system. Additionally, EMRO renewed collaboration with EMPHNET, a network of public health institutes in the EMR region. It is planned that EMPHNET will integrate EIOS into their public health intelligence activities and contribute to future EIOS expansion in EMR countries. Furthermore, in collaboration with EMRO, Iraq devised a plan for its subnational expansion of EIOS, extending to the Kurdish region.

EIOS

Updates from
WHO
Regional Offices

WHO SEARO: One Health collaboration

In partnership with the WHO country office in Sri Lanka, the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) is getting ready to train staff on using the EIOS system in November 2023.

Following Thailand's Ministry of Health, which has joined the EIOS initiative earlier this year, the Department of Livestock Development and part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand have expressed interest in bolstering national capacity for early warning in the animal health sector. Together with the Thailand MoH, WHO SEARO is partnering with the FAO Regional Office for the Asia Pacific region to organize an EIOS training in Bangkok in early 2024, emphasizing One Health collaboration within the country.

WHO WPRO: Mid-term EIOS CG meeting

The EIOS Core Team jointly with the Singapore Ministry of Health are co-organizing the mid-term EIOS CG meeting for the 2023-2024 CG in January 2024 in Singapore. The meeting will focus on the CG's role in implementing the new Expansion and Sustainability framework, and further explore priority topics of joint interest, which include collaborative surveillance and ways of moving EIOS beyond its current focus on detection of health threats.

WHO AFRO: Peer learning and experience sharing

During Q3/2023, the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) continued to pursue its ambitious strategy to expand EIOS to all Member States (MS) in the region by the end of next year through onboarding six new communities: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mauritania, and Namibia.

Since the start of expansion in 2019, 31 out of 47 MS in AFRO (66 %) have joined the global EIOS community and at least two more are scheduled to be trained before the end of this year.

To further sustainability and regional collaboration, AFRO has embarked on an effort to foster peer learning and experience-sharing across the region. Experienced EIOS system users from the Zambia and Uganda Ministries of Health have co-facilitated EIOS trainings along with EIOS trainers in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. These experience-sharing sessions have proven valuable for the onboarding process, and are an effective way of enabling new MS communities to get better acquainted with the system.

WHAT'S NEW

in EIOS?



Quarterly system update

EIOS SYSTEM COORDINATION

A joint technical coordination meeting between the WHO, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) and the European Commission's Department for Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HERA) took place at the JRC premises in Ispra, Italy, in October 2023. Participants discussed the **next major release of EIOS (v.2.0)** and additional work packages for enhanced modularity, increased scalability, and new analysis capabilities including in the field of machine learning.

Another topic of discussion was the **adaptation and enhancement of the EIOS software lifecycle management** for further EIOS expansion and ongoing sustainability. WHO and JRC renewed their commitment to continue working together on mid- and long-term strategies, allowing to accelerate the development response to user requests in a rapidly growing user community. To enable this, WHO and partners will identify opportunities to increase resources to lead on the overall maintenance, further development and operations of the EIOS system and JRC committed to accelerate applied research in advanced analytics and decision support.

Quarterly sources update

The quality, quantity, and variety of sources feeding into the EIOS system is a key factor in determining the system's relevance and value for its users. Adding new relevant sources to better reflect and address the needs of our growing global and increasingly diverse community of practice, as well as monitoring their performance is therefore an ongoing effort that is of utmost importance. **In Q3/2023, 1,375 sources were added to the EIOS system, increasing the overall number to 22,769.** A special recognition to colleagues at PAHO, who have been leading on adding relevant sources in their region!

Category Corner

Similar to the work on sources, adding and refining categories is a continuous effort and a major success factor for the strength of the EIOS system. In Q3, we developed, tested and added 20 new categories into the system.

To further enhance **respiratory disease and symptom related monitoring**, several new categories have been added, these include: Latent tuberculosis infection, Non-tuberculous mycobacteria, Bronchitis, Laryngitis, Rhinitis, Tachypnea and Sore throat. In addition, we have developed new categories to monitor Acute liver failure, Alpha-gal syndrome, Erythema, Anopheles stephensi, Burkholderia mallei, Oz virus, Francisella tularensis, Ralstonia, Ralstonia mannitolilytica, Taenia saginata, Hypertension and Bioterrorism.

On the subject of **mass gatherings**, we have developed a new generic category for monitoring Pride events to support with enhanced EBS activities earlier this year.

NEW CATEGORY EDITOR

Managing categories will soon become easier and more efficient. Together with colleagues from the JRC, we are currently testing a new category editor. New expected features include: versioning, keyword expansion, enhanced linking and sharing of category definitions. These **new features will contribute to improved and more efficient category management** by the EIOS Core Team, and will make it easier to collaborate with others. As part of this process a review and clean-up of >250 category definitions was completed in Q3 in order to improve performance and ensure the smooth migration of these categories into the new category editor.

UPDATES FROM BERLIN

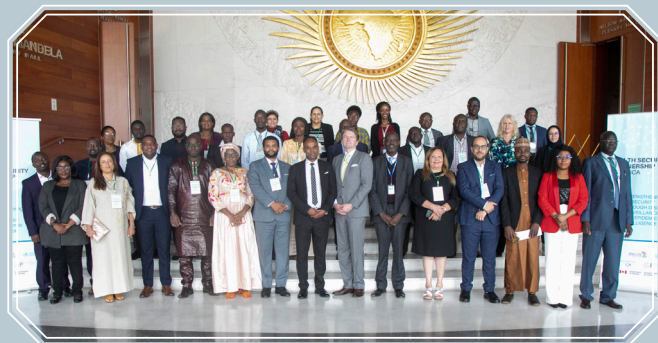
Our work at the [WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence](#) over the past three months has once more highlighted the commitment, opportunities, and innovations that we have embraced at the global, regional and country levels as we put collaborative surveillance into action!

We look forward to continue working alongside Member States, National Public Health Agencies (NPHAs) and other stakeholders across disciplines and geographies to transform global surveillance and deliver on our promise of “Health For All”.

Some of the [highlights from the past three months](#) include:

- Launch of the Health Security Partnership to Strengthen Disease Surveillance and Epidemic Intelligence in Africa initiative with Africa CDC and RKI
 - Historic High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly [Read more](#)
 - The first annual International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) Global Partners Forum (GPF). [Read more](#)
- For more information, read the [Hub's latest newsletter](#), visit our [website](#) or contact us at pandemichub@who.int.

The WHO Pandemic Hub cordially invites you to join the next session of the **Complexity of Pandemics speaker series – Confronting climate-sensitive infectious diseases** on **6 December 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 pm (CET)**. [REGISTER HERE](#)



Launch of the Health Security Partnership to Strengthen Disease Surveillance and Epidemic Intelligence in Africa initiative. Photo: © Africa CDC.



The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) convened its first Global Partners Forum on 13 October 2023 in Berlin. Photo: © WHO/ Marcio Schimming.

COMMUNITY CLOSE-UP: Italy

Name of Community: Italy
Active on EIOS since: June 2023
[as part of the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI) since 2018]
Number of members: 21

HOW MANY DIFFERENT ENTITIES ARE REPRESENTED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

One entity: The Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Italy's National Institute of Health.

WHAT DO YOU USE EIOS FOR?

Since 2007, Italy has been developing and strengthening an Event Based Surveillance (EBS) system focused on naturally occurring biological threats. This system is coordinated by ISS and includes a network of approximately 40 analysts from various locations across the country. In the past, these

analysts have been using MediSys to screen for national signals, whereas the EIOS system has been used in context of the GHSI for international early alerting and response activities.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT EIOS?

The decision to fully transition to EIOS for our national and international epidemic intelligence activities in 2023 was mainly based on the fact that the EIOS initiative continues to grow, and that the system is increasingly used worldwide. We appreciate its continuous development and the support offered by the EIOS Team.

Compiled by Mateo Urdiales Alberto, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS)