

## **FOREWORD**

### **TOWARDS MORE EFFICIENT CONTROL AND ERADICATION OF BRUCELLOSIS IN THE SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

The International MetaNET Project Thematic Scientific Conference: “Brucellosis in the South Eastern European and Mediterranean Region” which was held in Struga, Republic of Macedonia, from 12 to 14 November 2009 ([www.brucellosis09.iph.mk](http://www.brucellosis09.iph.mk)) was useful and beneficial on several counts. More than 150 experts from almost 20 SEE and other countries in Europe and beyond participated in the Conference and created a network for further intersectoral cooperation among the medical and veterinary professions. Representatives from certain international organizations also joined the conference, i.e. FAO, the European Commission and WHO. A special contribution to the conference’s high international scientific level was made by ten invited top-level experts on brucellosis as keynote lecturers from various countries in the world: two from USA and two from Germany, and one from each of the following countries: Argentina, Great Britain, Israel, Norway and Spain.

The conference was organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Macedonia, and the Stability Pact Forum for Public Health Cooperation in the SEE (FPH-SEE) MetaNET Project.

The organizers of the Conference were the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, and the National Institute for Public Health, Skopje. The expert-logistical realization was carried out by the Institute of Social Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje. The Conference was funded by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and ReplekPharm, Skopje.

The primary aim of the Conference was to gather international and regional scientists with an interest in brucellosis, as well as governmental and international authorities. The Conference aims and objectives were as follows:

1. To review the current understanding of brucellosis, the state of current strategies and approaches, and to identify weak points in the prevention and control of brucellosis;
2. To initiate an exchange of knowledge and data from fundamental and applied research, experience and views on various epidemiological and public health aspects of brucellosis as a global zoonosis and public health threat and concern: veterinary conditions and activities including vaccines and animal models, immunology, molecular biology and genomics, laboratory and sero-diagnostics, pathogenesis, clinical aspects and treatment of patients with brucellosis;
3. To encourage collaboration among these experts and to strengthen international ties and professional networks among SEE and Mediterranean countries and beyond – essential in the search for solutions in the ongoing struggle against this global zoonosis;
4. To provide a forum for discussion for a better understanding of *Brucella* and brucellosis and to recommend tools and procedures relevant to prospective developments in various aspects of brucellosis prevention, control and eradication at the national and international level.

The Conference Agenda was organized in six thematic working sessions with oral presentations and related poster sessions for each main theme. At the end of the Conference a Round-table discussion was organized for the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations for future activities and collaboration. A draft – Declaration on intersectoral and regional cooperation on the control and eradication of brucellosis in SEE was adopted, followed by a discussion with suggestions for modification and supplementation toward the final version of the text of the Declaration.

Before and during the Conference a conclusion was brought for printing the full text of papers from the conference presentations given by the invited keynote speakers and other experts from Macedonia and other countries in three special thematic issues on brucellosis in three scientific journals: the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts journal “Prilozi (Contributions)”, the Croatian Medical Journal, and the Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences. The thematic issues on brucellosis would have permanent value in the planning and implementation of further activities on the prevention and eradication of brucellosis at the national, regional and international levels.

The general impression of all participants was that the Conference achieved all its anticipated aims. The number of participants was more than 150 (100 constantly present, about 200 at the Opening ceremony) and the number and content of the presented papers and posters, short presentations of knowledge and observations from the scientific and expert activities and discussions was satisfactory.

The special international importance of the conference was even more emphasized by the adopted Declaration which should represent the first step in the future organized intersectoral collaboration within and between the countries in SEE toward more successful control and eradication of brucellosis at national and international levels, with necessary and expected technical and financial support from the European Commission and relevant international organizations. Our vision for future cooperation and activities on the control and eradication of brucellosis in SEE countries assumes an active role for Macedonia, and the Conference in Struga is a stimulus for organizing similar conferences every two years in the future.

“To keep a lamp burning we have to put oil in it” – Mother Teresa

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