

Communicating with Public Health Organizations: Technical Solution

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Abstract. By working with experts throughout Europe, ECDC pools Europe's health knowledge, so as to develop authoritative scientific opinions about the risks posed by current and emerging infectious diseases. Difficulties rose in the management of competent bodies' lists and the information was duplicated several times across the organization. ECDC started implementing a CRM system to organize the information in a structured data model, track the history of communication, provide contact information to application in house and support the nomination process and the user identity management for these applications.

Keywords: CRM, information management, public health.

1 Introduction and Requirements

The European Centre of Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU agency established in 2005 with the mission to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infection diseases. In order to achieve this mission, ECDC works in partnership with national protection bodies across Europe to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems. By working with experts throughout Europe, ECDC pools Europe's health knowledge, so as to develop authoritative scientific opinions about the risks posed by current and emerging infectious diseases.

ECDC activities rely on coordination and constantly involve communication and exchange of information with many external organizations and people. ECDC is a fast growing organization, both in terms of people and functional coverage and activities.

Difficulties are arising in the management of contact lists and the information is duplicated several times across the organization. Many files are outdated while contacting the right person having the right role is critical in the daily activity of ECDC.

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To support its growth, ECDC implemented a Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0 system to organize the information about external entities in a structured data model.

In many cases, ECDC relies on past events and the corresponding actions that were taken to build up its knowledge base and experience in order to speed up response to present and future threats. Keeping the history of communications and people contacted regarding a subject becomes an important part of the global knowledge base strategy.

The aim of the CRM system is to provide ECDC with a tool to help structure information about countries, organizations, people, documents and activities. Many projects were identified across ECDC organization, some of which can be integrated and interfaced to work seamlessly with the CRM.

The target is to put the CRM as the main system for contacts management. CRM will interface with other systems and provide them with contacts management features and services.

2 Implementation Phases

To accelerate the delivery of the CRM, the solution will be implemented in several phases. High priority functionalities are implemented in early phases.

Phase 1 was composed of the core CRM functions requested by all units: structure information about countries, organizations and people; organize and manage contact lists in a standard format across ECDC; easily find competent bodies and the designated contacts; categorize contacts and create groups of contacts (related to an organization, network, project, topic...); display organizations by country, and contacts by organization or by group; search and find entities using multiple criteria; manage meetings and visits; save the history of the exchanges with contacts; print, sort and export information; mail merge with Microsoft office documents; integration in Outlook; possibility of attaching files to entities; access the information remotely or while not connected to ECDC network.

Phase 2 is composed of the unit specific CRM functions: customized templates for all units; automates creating badges and documents for meetings, personalized letters and emails; customized views for all units; implementation of hidden fields by unit for CAB and HCU; marketing module for HCU: mailing lists and communication campaigns; interface with EU publication office for HCU; service module for PRU: cases to group outbreak related communication; interface with document management server for SAU.

Phase 3 is composed mainly of interfaces with other systems and ongoing projects: interface with Portal; interface with Active directory; interface with EWRS; interface with Experts database; interface with terminology server; interface with SAP.

Phase 4 is composed of optional projects and requests: articles management and review for HCU; customization of service module for crisis management for PRU; contract management for ADMIN; interface with registry system for CAB/ADMIN; interface with EPIS; integration of EPIET.