

EG Chairs and ITAs Fourth Meeting Vilnius, Lithuania 26 February 2007

Title	Meeting Minutes	
Submitted by	Secretariat	
List of annexes	Annex 1 – List of participants	
	Annex 2 – List of documents submitted to the meeting	
Summary / Note	This document recalls the main discussion points and decisions made during the 4 th EG Chairs and ITAs Meeting	

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting

The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Marek Maciejowski, the Head of the NDPHS Secretariat. The representative of the Host Country, Mr. Viktoras Meižis welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting **adopted** the Provisional Agenda (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/2/1).

3. NDPHS Expert Groups – progress so far and plans for the future

With reference to the NDPHS Work Plan for 2007¹ (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/3/Info 1), the <u>Representatives of the Expert Groups</u> provided (under their respective **sub-items 3.1 to 3.4**) information regarding the progress that their Expert Groups made since late 2006 and the future plans of their respective groups.

3.1 Expert Group on HIV/AIDS

Mr. Pauli Leinikki, the Chairman of the HIV/AIDS EG, informed that the EG was currently implementing 23 projects, while seven more were under consideration, mostly focusing on controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Barents and NDPHS region. Most projects were well in line with the priorities of the HIV/AIDS EG. The total financing of these projects amounted to 5,648,000 EUR. Many projects were also implemented with the help of the Barents Secretariat and its HIV programme. The EG as such was only monitoring these activities.

He pointed out that many of these projects would not be renewed and therefore called for approaching the EC in order to be able to continue the work carried out. The EG planned to work on the renewal of policy papers and on new EG priorities on HIV/AIDS to be submitted to CSR 12.

¹ This Work Plan includes work plans of the NDPHS Expert Groups, which were available at the time of its adoption.

In view of the HIV EG's presentation, the Meeting discussed issues related to the financing of Expert Groups, increasing Partners involvement in Expert Groups, Lead and Co-lead Partners as well as the development of EG work plans 2008 on a general basis:

Expert Groups' financial basis and ideas and efforts to ensure adequate funding for EG activities and projects

Mr. Pauli Leinikki pointed out that the EG on HIV/AIDS enjoyed sound funding from several projects, however many project-based fund were about to run out. The funds were initially raised by initiatives from individual members of the EG who dealt with the entire project process, from the drafting and fundraising to the implementing stage.

He further reiterated that the work, conducted by the ITA was also funded on a project basis and that an application will be done for the Finnish ministry to finance the ITA as a joint project coordinator for the Murmansk project and ITA for the EG in 2008-2010.

He further recalled that the major goal of the NDPHS was to stipulate increased coordination and cooperation but felt that it was unrealistic to be able to gather all the activities conducted in the NDPHS area, as the Expert Groups were only aware of a certain number of them, which were reported to them. He concluded this part of his presentation by recalling the need for the Expert Groups to reach out further to the EU and its financing mechanisms.

Mr. Mikko Vienonen reminded the Expert Groups that funding should not only be sought from the EC, but also from UNAIDS, the US or other major funds. He, however, considered it a matter of definition, which projects needed to be counted as NDPHS projects and pointed out that the SHILWA EG was not counting several bilateral Finnish or Norwegian activities into the overall NDPHS activities.

Mr. Wiking Husberg informed that ILO Moscow focal point for HIV/AIDS managed a 2 million USD project in Murmansk. He wondered if such a project counted as an EG activity or not. He further announced that Russia was ready to fund ILO related projects on OSH in Russia and CIS countries.

<u>The Chairman</u> informed that France had offered to host several Expert Group meetings in Paris, as France's in-kind contribution to the NDPHS. As the next meeting of the PH EG will be held in Paris and, likewise, the Chairman encouraged other Expert Groups to avail themselves of the France's offer and also organize their meetings with the help of the French Ministry of Health. To that end, the Secretariat offered its assistance in approaching France about this issue, if necessary.

Increasing Partners' involvement in the NDPHS Expert Groups and ensuring their proper representation in the groups

Mr. Pauli Leinikki stressed that the HIV/AIDS EG would like to invite representatives from other groups to their meetings and would also favor a stronger focus on TB, to which WHO and possibly ILO may be able to contribute.

Mr. Viktoras Meižis added that it would be a good idea to also include project coordinators from bigger projects in the forthcoming Chairs and ITA meetings in order to gain a broader overview of activities in the NDPHS area.

• Encouraging Partners to assume responsibility of an Expert Group Co-Lead Partner

<u>The Chairman</u> informed that the idea to have an institution of a Co-lead Partner is that that Partner could take some of the leadership burden off the shoulder of the Lead Partner. A Co-lead Partner could even be leading certain activities within the EG. Furthermore, having a Co-Lead Partner could eventually become the EG's Lead Partner, when the time for rotation is ripe, and thus ensure a smooth transfer and the continuity of the EG's leadership.

Mr. Mikko Vienonen recalled that the SIHLWA EG had Lithuania as a Co-lead Partner which had proven to be extremely valuable and helpful, as it means that countries become involved with each other on a bilateral level. Lithuania was also able to provide help in hosting a meeting and financing support. While the Lead Partner had an clearly stipulated obligation (approx 100,000 EUR per annum), the Co-Lead Partner was free to chose the means of support, be it moral or financial. But the most important aspect of Co-leadership was to learn that certain practical aspects within the SIHLWA EG needed to be resolved.

Mr. Kari Paaso suggested that the EU and the EC could also become Lead or Co-Lead Partners of the Expert Groups. This, he concluded, would increase the NDPHS visibility and prominence.

• Development of Expert Group Work Plans for 2008 and other issues of relevance to each individual group

<u>The Chairman</u> called for the Expert Groups to start drafting their Work Plans for 2008 so that they would be ready in due time before the CSR 12 in the fall of 2007. On the other hand, it could be remembered that, probably, the most preferred option for the Partners would be that they would have a chance to earmark funding for certain EG activities in their financial budget for 2008, still before the national budgets were approved.

3.2. Expert Group on Primary Health Care

Mr. Carl Eric Thors, the Chairman of the PHC EG, informed that during its recent meeting the EG had elaborated an Action plan for 2007, which defined four working areas, namely:

- the development of a framework for the PH EG;
- the production of thematic reports and situation analysis:
- the planning, implementation and monitoring of projects;
- PHC EG contribution to the NDPHS database and project pipeline activities.

The areas of action include health promotion and disease prevention, development of PHC structures, data collection from PHC, the analysis of the implication of demographic changes in the area of PHC, etc.

He explained that Sweden financially supported the recruitment of an ITA for the EG. The EG decided to also have task managers who would manage specific tasks and report to the ITA.

3.3. Expert Group on Prison Health

Ms. Ingrid Lycke Ellingsen, the Chair of the PH EG, informed the Meeting that she was elected the Chair of the Expert Group during the recent meeting held on 13-14 February 2007. Substantive information about several ongoing activities and projects in the area of prison health was provided during that meeting, including a Norwegian project in Russia (WINNING) as well as an interregional WHO project, which gave a clear overview about the situation in prisons, based on WHO's statistical data. The group was now actively collecting more project information to gain a comprehensive overview of all ongoing activities. The Terms of Reference were agreed upon and the Expert Group's priority areas were identified. The EG will mainly focus on vulnerable groups in prison, including women, mothers and their children, young people, as well as other persons suffering from bad somatic and mental health conditions. Further the group intended to put an emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation activities.

Ms. Lycke Ellingsen informed that the group had also decided to invite other members of Expert Groups to their forthcoming meetings to encourage information exchange and a closer cooperation. In this regard she stressed that the group had common points of interest with the Expert Groups on Primary Health Care and HIV/AIDS. One of the most pressing needs for the EG was to recruit an ITA, for which Norway had provided funding.

3.4. Expert Group on Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability (SIHLWA)

1. Mr. Mikko Vienonen the Coordinating Chairman of the SIHLWA EG, stressed that all three SIHLWA subgroups were represented at the meeting. He informed that SIHLWA had its Terms of Reference approved by the CSR 9 meeting in Paris and that its Action Plan for 2007 was in place. The main activities for 2007 were to conduct a SIHLWA stakeholder analysis, to continue the work on strengthening links with main partners (especially WHO-EURO, ILO/Russia), and national actors on NCDs (a conference was planned in St Petersburg in December 2007) and healthy lifestyles and to collaborate with SIHLWA projects and integrate/ update them in the new NDPHS database.

Furthermore SIHLWA had also produced an Annual Progress Report. While some Expert Groups only foresaw one or two representatives form each country, the SIHLWA access for Experts was not restricted, but very open, in order to invite as many experts as possible. Referring to his PowerPoint presentation¹ he mentioned that not all countries had yet sent a representative to the SIHLWA subgroups. The next SIHLWA meeting was scheduled for 29-30 May 2007 in Helsinki, Finland.

3.4.1. Subgroup on Adolescent Health and Socially Rewarding Lifestyles (ADO)

Mr. Mikko Vienonen, the Chairman of the Subgroup, stated that the Subgroup did not have an ITA which made it difficult for it to raise funds for new projects while implementing others. Two new projects were under development, one focusing on "Alcohol and Drug Prevention among Youth" and the other one on "Children at Risk."

¹ Available on the NDPHS website at the EG Chairs and ITAs 4 Meeting page in the post-meeting documentation section.

Both projects would initially conduct their activities in the St. Petersburg region, keeping however in mind possibilities for spreading into other regions in ND area.

3.4.2. Subgroup on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Mr. Wiking Husberg, the Chairman of the Subgroup, reported that the SIHLWA Subgroup on Occupational Safety and Health was also part of the Baltic Sea Network, benefiting from Barents' expertise. The Subgroup had supported and promoted the European Week for Safety and Health at Work, "Safe Start: 23-27 October 2006". Furthermore, the NW ILO Russia project was implemented under the umbrella of the Partnership and linked its activities to the 10 CIS countries, covered by ILO Moscow¹. The project had just received a two year project extension, amounting to 282,000 USD.

The Subgroup had also been carrying out a situational analysis in OSH in the Baltic States, and will now use the data and compare it with the new ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 187, the new WHO programme on workers health and the new health strategy of the EU to identify common ground and see if the data was applicable to these international instruments. The subgroup planned to produce a draft policy paper on this OSH analysis, whose results could eventually be discussed in the forthcoming CSR 12 meeting, as OSH was not high enough on the political agenda, yet.

Mr. Wiking Husberg further informed about a new project on problems related to cardiovascular diseases in the transport industry, including HIV/AIDS.

3.4.3. SIHLWA Subgroup on Alcohol (ALC)

Mr. Kari Paaso, the Chairman of the Subgroup, reported on the huge alcohol problems that persist in Russia, and presented the intentions of the Subgroup to bring forward the alcohol policy measures (population based effective measures). He stressed that it was a challenge for the group to receive funding from donors to tackle health-related for alcohol issues.

3.5 General discussion and conclusions

Several participants stressed that the Expert Groups' key problem was that the NDPHS didn't have enough resources to fully support the Expert Groups' activities. So far, the Expert Groups have been operating on a voluntary basis. Experts invested a lot of effort, time and their travel budgets into the Expert Group activities while the NDPHS was not in a position to provide a substantial financial support.

Mr. Mikko Vienonen remarked that the financing of ITAs on a project basis, and the need to ensure that the Lead Partner of an Expert Group can provide reasonable funding, often resulted in a heavy administrative burden. He added that the Finish leadership of the group in terms of funding was guaranteed for 2007, while 2008 was so far only based on a gentlemen's agreement and suggested that it would be good having a Co-lead Partner which could eventually take over to ensure the needed continuity.

As small travel budgets and the hosting of meetings often brought forth the same financial and administrative challenges, the Meeting further considered the possibility of having Expert Group back-to-back meetings.

 $^{^{1}\}text{ Armenia Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan , Uzbekistan}$

Mr. Pauli Leinikki added that the Expert Groups would need to produce a priority paper with their respective areas of actions in order to better reach out to the donors. However, the NDPHS as such should also support the Expert Groups by drafting a set of recommendations which provide guidance and direction for the Expert Groups.

Mr. Teppo Heiskanen, the Director of the NCM Office in Vilnius, stated that the NCM had experience in working with the Commission, mostly through the Baltic Euroregional network and relying on resources from the Interreg funds. He said that the Interreg was still very open to the cooperation with Russia. While the EU focus was not yet on Public Health and Social Wellbeing, it could still move towards it, if the right mechanisms were set up. He promised his support in identifying funding sources and promoting the NDPHS Expert Group activities.

Mr. Viktoras Meižis reported about the meeting that he, as Chairman of the NDPHS CSR, and the Head of the NDPHS Secretariat held with Mr. Tapani Piha, Head of the Health Measures Unit in the EC's Health and Consumer Protection Directorate. Mr. Tapani had promised to attend the forthcoming CSR 11 meeting and had also informed that other staff members from his unit would be involved in the cooperation with the NDPHS.

He further stressed that the NDPHS activities would need to be streamlined with the "Health in Europe - a strategic approach" paper, which could open doors to extend the EC participation into the Expert Groups and could provide great opportunities for NDPHS. The project proposals needed to use the existing funding mechanisms of the EC.

Finally, Mr. Meižis suggested to produce a list of important activities that the Expert Groups and the NDPHS as such wanted to run and then to present that list to the EC.

Based on the above made statements the Meeting **concluded** that it was crucial to find a sustainable financial mechanism supporting the work of the NDPHS Expert Groups.

The Meeting agreed

- That the Expert Group would submit progress reports, covering the year 2007 for submission to the CSR 12 meeting in autumn. The reports should be submitted to the Secretariat in due time before the CSR 12, so that it could produce an overall progress report and submit it to the CSR 12, too
- That the Expert Groups would contribute to a policy paper, which would be complied by the secretariat. The paper would present the Expert Groups respective areas of actions as well as a set of Policy Recommendations, aiming to better reach out to the donors and put the Expert Groups' work on a more solid footage. In view of the preparations of the paper, it was further agreed that the Expert Groups would develop a list of concrete project-based activities; addressing the most important and urgent issues emerging within the Expert Groups;
- That a new way of financing was needed to support the Expert Groups activities. The setting up of a voluntary fund should be reconsidered, in order to have seed money available for enabling the Expert Groups to benefit from co-financing mechanisms and to ensure that their work would be sustainable:
- That the Expert Groups would consider holding back-to back meetings and/or inviting to Expert Group meetings representatives of other Expert Groups and managers from bigger projects in the ND area, if appropriate;
- To encourage Partners to support Expert Groups by ensuring that not only Lead Partners are in place for each Expert Group, but also Co-Lead Partners;

- That the Expert Groups would develop their Work Plans for 2008 and submit them to CSR 12 in order for them to provide input to, *inter alia*, the NDPHS Work Plan for 2008 to be prepared for the Partnership Annual Conference that is planned to be held in Vilnius. Lithuania on 16 November 2007.

The Meeting then discussed Item 6 before item 4.

4. Expert Groups' involvement in other NDPHS activities

4.1 NDPHS Project Database

<u>The Secretariat</u> informed the Meeting that he EC had now given its final approval to the NDPHS Database project, starting retroactively from 1 February 2007. It further introduced Mr. Redas Laukys, who will work as a project Main Expert and assist the Secretariat in the coordination of the project. Mr. Laukys' contract, which he will sign with the Lithuanian Ministry of Health, will be ready soon.

The <u>Secretariat</u> further referred to the list of issues for the successful launching of the NDPHS Project Database (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.1/Info 2) and the Draft Annex I to the grant agreement with the EC regarding the NDPHS Database Project (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.1/Info 1). With reference to the list of work packages (WP) contained in the latter document, the Secretariat requested the Expert Groups' active participation in the project implementation, especially as regards the following work packages:

- Disseminating the database results (WP2) through their networks and the organization of events;
- Providing information on specific health areas (WP 5), including the collection of the information and publicizing it through brochures, etc.;
- Providing thematic reports and creation of network (WP 6). To that end the Secretariat mentioned that besides the thematic reports, the project also foresees the publishing and dissemination of a newsletter. I order to create a proper distribution list and NDPHS network, the Expert Groups were requested to provide the Secretariat with links to other web portals (ministries, agencies, etc) and lists of e-mail addresses of people who could be interested in receiving the newsletter, and being part of the NDPHS distribution network. The Secretariat further informed that it had already collected some 100 Non-NDPHS e-mail addresses.

Furthermore, the <u>Secretariat</u> requested Expert Group to nominate one or two experts from each group to act as the group's focal point for all database related issues. It is expected that these persons would be invited to, *inter alia*:

- Provide input to the database development (WP 4), and
- Provide input to the project pipeline (WP 7);
- Participate in the Database Project Steering Group meetings;
- Submit a list of financial input (travel, per diem, etc) to prove the NDPHS' own contribution to the project, as the project is based on an EC co-financing mechanism;
- Ensure that the Expert Groups' knowledge was properly reflected in the database;
- Provide other input, on request.

The Chairman announced that the first meeting of the Project Database Steering Group would be held on the 27 March in Warsaw, just before the CSR 11 Meeting. He then asked the Expert Groups to include the above mentioned activities into their work plans, just the way how the PHC EG had done it, and concluded that the Secretariat had earmarked project funds for the Expert Groups to support their involvement in the implementation of work packages 2, 5 and 6.

The Meeting **agreed** to provide the support to the database development as requested by the Secretariat and proposed to take a three steps approach, namely:

- to identify relevant stakeholders acting in the ND area and create a list of ongoing projects;
- to provide a situational analysis and draft a policy paper on the ND Expert Group activities;
- to update the Expert group activities on an annual basis

4.2 NDPHS Project Pipeline

With reference to document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.2/Info 1, the Secretariat introduced the description of the main functions and development of the NDPHS project pipeline.

It was questioned if the donors would make use of the pipeline, and, in response, the Secretariat informed that the Norwegian donor was currently trying to include pipeline project proposals in their grant allocation schemes of 2007.

The Meeting **suggested** that the CSR should ensure that the donor agencies from the CSR Partner Countries will make use of the pipeline in the near future. Further, the Meeting **agreed** to provide feedback on the pipeline in written form to the Secretariat.

4.3 NDPHS website

The Chairman informed that the Secretariat had received two offers for the development of the web engine and the website visual interface. He referred to the brief description of the NDPHS Expert Groups (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.2/Info 1) and announced that the new website should be ready at the end of March 2007. The new website engine would allow each Expert Group to maintain its own section of the website, their own calendar of events, meeting documents section, post their own news and information about their activities via an easy-to use web-interface. It is, therefore vital that the EGs would be ready with the information that they would like to post on the new website sometime in April 2007. The Secretariat promised to get back to the EGs regarding this matter in due time.

The Meeting **agreed** on the approach suggested by the Secretariat.

5. Engaging relevant stakeholders in endeavors to achieve NDPHS goals and objectives

The Meeting discussed how to involve all relevant stakeholders in endeavours to achieve NDPHS goals and objectives and **agreed** that it would be helpful to conduct a ND stakeholder analysis, in order to identify all actors. The Meeting further suggested having a liberal policy at the Expert Group level, so that potential new partners could easily participate and were not excluded from the beginning. The countries, such as Belarus, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and the U.S, which could be invited to become involved in the NDPHS should be approached by the CSR directly.

6. Preparations of the PAC 4 at the ministerial level and EG inputs thereto

The <u>CSR Chair, Mr. Viktoras Meižis</u> reiterated that a background document for PAC needed to be prepared. He suggested occupational safety and health as the key item on the PAC agenda, but mentioned that other EGs' activities should be presented, as appropriate. The outcome of PAC could be not just simple conclusions of the Chair but rather a strong message from the Ministers on selected NDPHS issues. He also informed that Lithuania planned to invite Mr.

David Byrne S.C., former European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection to the Conference.

In view of the above-mentioned, <u>Mr. Wiking Husberg</u> suggested to prepare a general information brochure about the NDPHS, describing the Partnership and the Expert Groups and to prepare a policy Paper on OSH for the ND region which could be discussed during PAC.

Mr. Mikko Vienonen suggested updating the PowerPoint presentation the Secretariat had developed with input from the Expert Groups to provide a general overview of the NDPHS activities.

Mr. Jøgen Kaurin remarked that it was important to identify the political needs of the Partner Countries before deciding on PACs overall topic.

Mr. Pauli Leinikki suggested referring to the new Northern Dimension Policy document.

<u>The Chairman</u> stated that the topic should be politically attractive and backed by strong NDPHS expert group expertise since it would be Expert Group(s) which would have to guarantee a proper follow up on the Political Declaration.

Mr. Wiking Husberg added that in the recent years, strong emphasis was put on health issues, while the area of well-being was slightly neglected, but could be changed by putting occupational safety and health on the PAC agenda.

The Secretariat offered to provide the EGs with a draft list of topics to be covered in the EGs progress reports to PAC so that the Expert Groups could then add their suggested. The Secretariat would then submit this revised list to the CSR for approval.

The Meeting **agreed** to the Secretariat's proposal.

7 Preparations of the CSR 11 meeting

The <u>Secretariat</u> introduced topics it would like to propose for the provisional agenda for the CSR 11.

The Meeting **took note** of the Secretariat's proposal.

8. Next EG Chairs and ITAs meeting

The Meeting **agreed** to convene the next EG Chairs and ITAs Meeting between August and Mid-September, in due time before the next CSR meeting. Such a meeting could be linked with one EG meeting. A suggestion was made to hold it in Stockholm, but no final decision was taken.

The Meeting **agreed** that the Secretariat will be in touch with the Chairs to discuss the dates and the hosting of the meeting in due course.

9. Adoption of the EG Chairs and ITAs 4 meeting minutes

<u>The Secretariat</u> proposed to send out a draft EG Chairs meeting minutes to participants on 6 March 2007 and that comments on the draft would be due, at the latest, on 13 March 2007. A

revised report would then be distributed on 16 March 2007 to be adopted *per capsulam* provided that no further comments were submitted within one week.

The Meeting agreed to the Secretariat's proposal,

10. Any other business

No topics were discussed under this agenda item.

11. Closing of the Meeting

The Meeting closed at 17:00 hours.

EG Chairs and ITAs Third Meeting Stockholm, Sweden 29 August 2006

Reference	Annex 1 to the Minutes	
Title	List of participants	
Submitted by	Secretariat	
Summary / Note	This list includes participants who participated in the Meeting	
Requested action	Participants in the meeting are invited to check their own contact details provided in this document and inform the Secretariat about any necessary corrections	

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Reference Annex 2 to the Minutes Title List of documents submitted to the meeting Summary / Note This list includes all documents submitted to the CSR 10 Meeting	
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Main documents

Code		Title	Submitted by	Date
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/2/1	Provisional agenda	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/2/2	Provisional annotated agenda	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/3/Info 1	NDPHS Work Plan for 2007	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.1/Info 1	A Database on Public Health Projects in North Eastern Europe and its neighbouring countries (brief project description)	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.1/Info 2	List of issues for the successful launching of the NDPHS Project Database	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.2/Info 1	Description of the main functions and development of the NDPHS project pipeline	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/4.3/Info 1	Brief overview of the NDPHS (core) Expert Groups	Secretariat	19/02/07

Auxiliary documents

	Code	Title	Submitted by	Date
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/Info 1	Practical information for participants	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/Info 2	Preliminary timetable	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/Info 3	List of documents submitted to the meeting	Secretariat	19/02/07
•	EG Chairs and ITAs 4/Info 4	List of Participants	Secretariat	07/03/07