

## Calendar of events

### Apr

26 April: [2nd High level conference on Industrial Competitiveness](#)

27 April: [Oral Health in Europe- promoting education, prevention and better access to dental care](#) (Brussels)

28-30 April: [Regional Congress of Mediterranean Countries: Sustainable Building](#) (Madrid, Spain)

28-30 April: [Inventing tomorrow: city life in transition](#)

28 April: [World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#)

29th April 2010 - [European Day of Solidarity between Generations](#)

### May

1-2 May: [EU-Lac Meeting of Young Leaders](#) (Malaga, Spain)

4-5 May: [Trade Union Forum associated to the EU-ALC Summit](#) (Madrid, Spain)

5-7 May: [Economic and Social Forum associated with the EU-LAC Summit](#) (Madrid, Spain)

5 - 7 May : [EGEA VI: Social and Health Benefits of Balanced Diet: The role of fruits and Vegetables](#) (Brussels)

6 May: [Putting citizens at the centre of EU](#)

## EU News

### Spanish Presidency hopes to reduce health inequalities...

EU health ministers, at an informal meeting arranged by the Spanish Presidency, have agreed to improve monitoring systems to identify the most vulnerable groups in society, such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled and socially excluded groups, in an attempt to improve health equity across Europe.

"We will continue to advance and we agree on developing more initiatives to reduce inequalities and we will focus on fostering the health care of vulnerable groups, fostering children and women's health care and in promoting healthy old age," said Spanish Health Minister Trinidad Jiménez.

The press conference following the meeting is available online [here](#).

### ...and attempts to move forward on cross-border healthcare

Ministers also pointed to the new EU rules on the co-ordination of social security systems (Regulation 883) as a way of moving forward with cross border healthcare. Spain is currently proposing the idea that if a European citizen resident in another EU country receives medical treatment in their country of origin, it is that country and not the country in which they reside which assumes the cost of the service.

The Spanish proposal also applies the dual legal basis to the whole directive and not just to some of the articles, as appeared in the text which was rejected last year. Spain also puts emphasis on ensuring the quality of the service provided and on the need for prior authorisation from a doctor for moving the patient to another country, except in case of accidents and emergency interventions.

More information about the meeting can be found on the [Spanish Presidency website](#)

### Health Equity conference cancelled but presentations available online

The experts' conference "Moving Forward Equity In Health", hosted by the Spanish Presidency and with the participation of EuroHealthNet, was unfortunately cancelled due to the flight restrictions following the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland.

The presentations are however available to download from the website of the Spanish Ministry of Health [here](#).

### Final DETERMINE report now available

The final report from the DETERMINE project ([www.health-inequalities.eu](http://www.health-inequalities.eu)), co-ordinated by EuroHealthNet, has now been published and presents some important key messages for taking action to improve health equity.

The report includes a range of examples from across Europe on policies and initiatives that can be taken to address the social determinants of health and improve health equity. It also includes key messages identified during the course of DETERMINE on what is needed to advance work in this area.

Amongst these is a call for more comparable data on the social and economic determinants of health, and this must include data from across the whole of government. Greater investment is also required: less than 4 per cent of national health expenditures are currently

[health policy](#) (Brussels)

13 - 15 May : [5th European Conference on Rare Diseases](#) (Krakow, Poland)

18 May: [EU-LAC Madrid Summit: Towards a new stage in the bi-regional partnership: Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion](#) (Madrid, Spain)

19 - 21 May : [6th European Sustainable Cities & Towns Conference](#) (Dunkerque, France)

20 May : [EU Public health Forum](#) (Brussels)

24-26 May: [2nd World Forum Against Drugs](#) (Stockholm, Sweden)

25 May: [Brussels Economic Forum](#)

27-29 May: [3rd Conference of Migrant and Ethnic Health Minority in Europe](#) (PCS, Hungary)

26-28 May: [EMSP Annual Congress 2010](#) (Stuttgart, Austria)

31 May: [World No Tobacco Day](#)

## June

10 June 2010: [How doctors can close the gap](#)

14-15 June 2010: [In-depth review seminar – area-based approaches to social inclusion](#)

21 June 2010: [Informal meetings of Ministers for Housing and Urban Development](#)

28-30 June 2010: [World Cities Summit 2010 – liveable and sustainable cities for the future](#)

28 June 2010: [World](#)

spent on health promotion – including engaging other policy sectors to address health inequalities, despite evidence of its cost-effectiveness.

To download the report in full, please visit the Equity Channel [publications page](#).

## EuroHealthNet updates evidence of innovative obesity projects

An update to another report from EuroHealthNet, "Focusing on Obesity Through a Health Equity Lens", uses new evidence to demonstrate the link between health inequalities and rising rates of obesity, and how existing measures to tackle the condition might be able to take this into account.

The new edition now contains close to 100 projects, from the international level to local community initiatives, which include different methodologies, settings, scale and scope to address obesity across society.

To download the report in full, please visit the Equity Channel [publications page](#).

## European Alcohol And Health Forum gets serious about commitments

One member of the European Alcohol And Health Forum, ReLeaf, has been suspended and a further 6 (Royal Ahold, ECYC, FEANTSA, FAEP, British Retail Consortium, ETUC) have until the end of May to introduce a commitment to the forum. Suspension means that organisations will be taken off the distribution list until an active commitment is entered into the database.

The decision was announced at the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting of the forum, and was followed by calls for greater focus on the effectiveness of the Forum's activities, at the very least to better highlight the Forum's efforts to the outside world. In response, it was highlighted that there was in fact considerable space to do this: for example, in the Open Forum, and through the forthcoming Clearing House and evaluation of the Alcohol Forum itself.

EuroHealthNet is not a member of the Forum but monitors its activities.

For more information, please see the meeting minutes [here](#).

## European Commission wants to hear your views on sport

The European Commission is conducting a public consultation on the EU's strategic choices for the implementation of the new EU competence in the field of sport. The consultation follows feedback given by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The consultation is addressed to organisations and citizens with an interest in sport in order to obtain their input for the Commission's future proposals.

The Lisbon Treaty calls on the EU to promote European sporting issues and to develop the European dimension in sport. The European Commission is preparing concrete policy options in view of the implementation of this new EU competence.

The online consultation will remain open until 1 June 2010 and can be found [here](#).

## MEPs call for stronger protection of self-employed workers and their partners

MEPs in the European Parliament's Women's rights committee debated a draft directive on equal treatment of self-employed workers and their spouses or life partners recognised by national law, which aims at improving their social protection and including provisions for maternity benefits.

Among the issues still to be agreed upon are the implementation of social protection on a mandatory or voluntary basis, deciding the period of maternity leave and access to temporary replacement services (for example, because of interruption of work due to

[Blood Donation Day](#)

[6<sup>th</sup> International conference on social work in health and mental health](#) (Dublin, Ireland)

#### Summer

4-6 July 2010: [Cities for Mobility World Congress 2010](#)

18-19 August 2010: [Well-being in the Information Society](#)

18-23 July 2010: [International AIDS conference](#) (Vienna)

30 Sept. 2010: [In-depth review seminar – child poverty](#)

#### More online

For a full list of upcoming events, please visit the [Equity Channel calendar](#).

pregnancy or motherhood). This draft directive is a part of the "family package", along with the so-called "Maternity Leave Directive". Its intention is to better balance work and family life. Being adopted last year in plenary, it will now go to the plenary session for second reading by MEPs in May.

Further details are available on the Women's rights committee [website](#).

### Pharmacovigilance proposals still too weak, say MEPs on industry committee

Current EU plans for a directive to ensure that medical products are safe for human use "will weaken the pharmacovigilance system", according to Michèle Rivasi, rapporteur for the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the proposed pharmacovigilance directive.

In particular, the Committee stresses that pharmacovigilance systems must be publicly funded to ensure independence, while there should be a limit on the involvement of pharmaceutical companies in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data about the possible side-effects of medical products, to avoid potential conflicts of interest. This data should be easily accessible to independent experts and the public, the Committee recommends.

The full list of the industry committee's amendments to the proposed directive can be found [here](#).

### Labour market still deteriorating, signs of stability in some countries

The Monthly Labour Market Monitor from the European Commission reports that the latest data covering the period up to February/March, indicate that the labour market in the EU is continuing to deteriorate at a moderate pace.

It has been nine months since the economy started to recover from deep recession, and it may take some time this year before the fragile pick-up in economic activity has an impact on reversing the trend in the labour market.

The full Monthly Labour Market Monitor from the European Commission is [here](#).

### First EU 'Joint Programming Initiative' to boost research on Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases

A new European-wide research strategy to tackle neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease has been announced, the first of the EU Joint Programming Initiatives which are designed to address 'grand challenges' which cannot be tackled effectively and efficiently by any one Member State.

The ultimate goal of the Joint Programming Initiative on combating Neurodegenerative Diseases, which will receive an EU contribution of close to € 2 million, is to accelerate progress in understanding the causes of these debilitating conditions, leading to early diagnosis, the development of new treatments and prevention and the provision of more effective medical and social care to improve the quality of life for patients and care givers.

For more information, please see this [press release](#) from the European Commission.

### New study on the status of Europe's "working poor"

The European Foundation for the improvement of Working and Living Conditions has just published a new study about the working poor in Europe. Being in work greatly reduces the risk of poverty. Nevertheless, in 2007, in the EU, 8% of the employed population was at risk of poverty.

The report states that "With the exception of six countries – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Norway and the UK – the issue of the working poor is not seen as a government policy priority in most EU Member States," with social partners in most member states having a focus on poverty and its social implications in general, rather than the working poor

as a group.

More information and the complete study can be found on the [Eurofound website](#).

## European Commission to fund research into genetic link to cancer

The European Commission has agreed to provide €21 million in funds for two new research projects on cancer, as part of an international research effort coordinated since 2007 by the International Cancer Genome Consortium (ICGC), which aims to identify the changes in the human genome present in many forms of cancer.

The two new projects, BASIS and CAGEKID, are expected to receive €10.5 million each from the EU and to involve 27 research institutes from 10 countries throughout Europe and the USA. They will focus on unlocking the genetic code of breast cancer (the most common class of cancer diagnosed in women worldwide with more than one million cases diagnosed annually) and kidney cancer (of particular importance in Europe where the highest global incidence rates are observed).

More information can be found on the European Commission [website](#).

## EU-wide databank for medical devices

The European Commission has adopted a decision which will oblige all EU countries to use, as of May 2011, a European databank for medical devices (Eudamed). Medical devices range from life-supporting devices such as pacemakers through hip implants or X-ray machines, down to products used daily such as syringes or blood tests.

Data which are key to their safety – such as conformity certificates, data on clinical investigations – are for the time being collected only at the national level. The Eudamed databank is a secure IT tool which will ensure rapid access to such data by market surveillance authorities. The databank will also streamline the rules for manufacturers placing in vitro diagnostic (IVD) devices on the market.

Please visit the [Eudamed website](#) for more details.

### National news

## Sweden: suggestions for greater health equity...

The Swedish National Institute of Public Health (SNIPH) has produced an analysis of the lessons that can be drawn, for Sweden's part, from the work that the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) and its final report 'Closing the gap in a generation'.

Among the overarching recommendations from the SNIPH is the call for genuine political action to take place. A public health perspective needs to be systematically integrated into other political sectors through inter-sectoral coordination of the various actors involved. It was suggested that a national management group, composed of representatives for agencies and other parties concerned, or alternatively through a wider committee with representatives from political parties, government administration and researchers, might be the best way to coordinate this action.

For a brief overview of the recommendations in the report, plus the full text in Swedish, please go to the [SNIPH website](#). We will let you know when an English version of this report is available.

## ...and how parents can improve teenage alcohol awareness

The Swedish National Institute of Public Health (SNIPH) has launched a campaign to inform parents about the dangers of supplying minors with alcohol. Called "TÄNK OM", the campaign is part of a governmental commission with the aim of to spread knowledge about teens and alcohol, with parents of teenagers as the primary target group.

Parents can play a key role in delaying the introduction of alcohol and thus reduce the risk of accidents and violence during adolescence and for alcohol-related problems later in life.

Please see the SNIPH website for [more details](#).

## Scotland: using telecare to help enhance healthy ageing...

Plans to use technology to help increasing numbers of older people to live at home for longer are being advanced with a £4 million investment in telecare across Scotland.

Telecare is delivered by electronic devices in people's homes that support them to live independently when previously they may have needed hospital or residential care.

Telecare can include:

- Motion sensors to detect when someone has not moved for some time and may have fallen
- Home safety devices such as fire, flood and intruder alarms linked to a staffed 24-hour response service
- Emergency pendants to summon help in a crisis
- Electronic reminder alerts to take medication, with carousel dispensers
- Vibrating 'rumble' pillows for people who are hard of hearing

As well as helping older people retain their independence at home, it is hoped that telecare will also help avoid an estimated 21,000 more hospital admission days.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/03/26162948>

## ...and researching the "Glasgow Effect"

Recent research has highlighted the existence of a 'Scottish effect', a term used to describe the higher levels of poor health experienced in Scotland over and above that explained by socio-economic circumstances. Evidence of this 'excess' being concentrated in West Central Scotland has led to discussion of a more specific 'Glasgow effect'.

However, within the UK, Glasgow is not alone in experiencing relatively high levels of poor health and deprivation. Liverpool and Manchester are two other cities which also stand out in this regard. However, despite the same levels of deprivation, premature deaths in Glasgow are more than 30% higher, with all deaths approximately 15% higher, across virtually the whole population.

The research paper, "It's not 'just deprivation': Why do equally deprived UK cities experience different health outcomes?" explores this phenomenon and can be downloaded [here](#).

## France: helping parents of children with learning disabilities

The French national institute for health promotion and education (INPES) has published a guide for parents of children with learning disabilities. The guide is called 'Troubles "Dys" de l'Enfant' because it provides advice for a range of disabilities: dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dysphasia and dyscalculia.

The booklet gives advice about how to look for possible signs of learning difficulties, including the process by which the child can be examined to determine the extent of the disorder. It also provides information about how education, health and social care support structures can help in the bringing up a child faced with learning difficulties.

More information can be found in the INPES newsletter (in French) [here](#).

## Wales: New tobacco controls proposed

New measures to protect children and young people from the harm caused by smoking have been unveiled by the Welsh Assembly Government. The proposals include a ban on the display of tobacco products in shops and to ban the sale of tobacco products through vending machines. Under the proposed regulations, specialist tobacconists will still be able to display

tobacco products within their shop, provided that displays cannot be seen from outside the shop. Restrictions will also be placed on the size of price lists for tobacco products in shops.

Subject to the outcome of a three-month consultation, which ends on 6 July, the Assembly Government aims to introduce the regulations in line with other UK countries. It is expected that the ban on vending machines will come into force in October 2011, along with the display requirements for small stores such as corner shops.

For more information, please see the Welsh Assembly Government [press release](#).

## **North West England: attitudes towards responsibility and health**

A new report launched by NHS North West revealed that 64% of respondents categorised in the harder to reach population in the North West of England believe that it is their own responsibility to look after their health, highlighting the need to raise awareness of preventative health services.

One cause for concern was the unrealistic perception many people have of their own health: 26 per cent of people surveyed were clinically obese (with a BMI of over 30), yet only 7 per cent of this group recognised that they were overweight. Similarly, as few as 6 per cent of people surveyed thought they were binge drinkers, whereas the reality was 40 per cent.

The full report is available [here](#).

### **Other international news**

## **Unequal progress in health MDGs**

Many low- and middle-income countries are not on track to reach the public health targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), according to a new report written jointly by academics from the University of Oxford, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the University of California San Francisco and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.

Unequal progress in health MDGs in low-income countries appears significantly related to burdens of HIV and NCDs in a population, after correcting for potentially confounding socioeconomic, disease burden, political, and health system variables.

The full report is available [here](#).

## **Health-EU portal editorial meeting: documents available**

The presentations and minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Health-EU Portal Editorial Board meeting are now available to download. The meeting addressed the achievements and next steps for the website, and included presentations on the official Austrian Health Portal and the Dutch national health and care portal.

The documents from this meeting are all available [here](#).

## **Social Platform pushes for Europe 2020 strategy to deliver real social inclusion**

Social Platform, the platform of European social NGOs, has written an open letter to José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and to the Commissioners, asking them to take decisive steps to ensure that the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs also includes commitments to more inclusive societies and the reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

Chief among the recommendations to the EC are for a social guideline to guarantee that macro-economic guidelines contribute to support adequate social protection systems and universal access to public services, and a specific guideline on social inclusion in order to help deliver on the headline poverty target.

The full text of the letter can be read on the Social Platform [website](#).

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