

## EU News

### Calendar of events

#### December

December 15th 2009:

[Seminar: Faith, Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion](#)  
(London, UK)

17 - 19 December

2009: [International Conference on Food Security and Environmental Sustainability](#)  
(Kharagpur, India)

#### 2010

6 - 10 January 2010:

[International Conference on Promotion Chronic Care](#) (Hong Kong)

10 - 12 February

2010: [International Conference: "Towards Better Work and Well-being"](#) (Helsinki, Finland)

24 - 26 February

2010: [5th WHO Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment - Protecting children's health in a changing environment](#) (Parma, Italy)

10 - 12 March 2010:

[WHO/Europe: Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) (Parma, Italy)

15 - 18 March 2010:

[World of Health IT Conference & Exhibition](#) (Barcelona, Spain)

22-26 March 2010:

[Week for EU Health Promotion and Health Equity](#) (Brussels)

6 - 7 April 2010:

[Health 2.0 Europe](#)  
(Paris, France)

8 - 9 April 2010: [6th edition of the French Prevention Days](#)

(Paris, France)

### EU still divided over cross-border healthcare

European health ministers remain unable to reach political agreement on a draft directive concerning the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.

Issues which still need consensus include the reimbursement of costs with regard to non-contractual healthcare providers, and the need to fully respect the case-law of the European Court of Justice while preserving the member states' rights to organise their health care system. The incoming Spanish Presidency will continue the work and to try to reach an agreement.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/111599.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/111599.pdf)

### Adapting to an ageing Europe

The issue of demographic change was also on the agenda of a meeting of national health ministers, who have encouraged governments to "make the issue of healthy and dignified ageing one of their priorities for the coming years and to shift their focus towards preventive measures in order to reduce the burden of chronic diseases, frailty and disability."

Ministers intend to invite the European Commission to consider coming forward with an action plan for further activities in 2011 to promote dignity, health and quality of life for older persons.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/111599.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/111599.pdf)

This call follows on from a conference on "*Healthy ageing in Europe- lessons learnt and ways forward*" held in Stockholm on 22nd and 23rd October 2009. The main aim of this conference was to stimulate more health promoting activities towards older people and to bring together experts in the field to build a strong partnership for the future.

A report of the conference by EuroHealthNet's Christina Dziejanska-Stringer presents the summary of the conference and next steps forward for the Ageing agenda in the EU, along with future opportunities for the Special Interest Group on Healthy Ageing. The report is available on the EuroHealthNet website [here](#).

### Care and the economy

Also on the subject of ageing, EuroHealthNet's Stecy Yghemonos, coordinator for the Equity Channel, attended a breakfast debate on "Care in a modern economy", which looked at how the EU can sustain health and care systems in the face of demographic change, with an ageing European population and more people living longer with disability.

The debate concluded with an emphasis on the need for significant investments in public services as well as the development of more flexible and adaptable services. Speakers also highlighted the need to develop policies and practices supporting those who want to combine work and care and the need to harness technology to address these challenges.

<http://www.theparliament.com/caring>

### EU wants input for future work on growth and jobs

The European Commission is looking for views on its future strategy for growth and jobs. Views are sought on how the EU can increase productivity and competitiveness while at the same time fostering social cohesion and environmentally friendly policies.

The EU 2020 strategy seeks to establish a "sustainable social market economy" which leads the way

9 - 11 April 2010: [1st Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Global Health](#) (Cuernavaca, Mexico)

14 - 16 April 2010: [18th International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services](#) (Manchester, UK)

5 - 7 May 2010: [EGEA VI: Social and Health Benefits of Balanced Diet: The role of fruits and Vegetables](#) (Brussels)

13 - 15 May 2010: [5th European Conference on Rare Diseases](#) (Krakow, Poland)

19 - 21 May 2010: [6th European Sustainable Cities & Towns Conference](#) (Dunkerque, France)

20 May 2010: [EU Public health Forum](#) (Brussels)

19 - 23 May 2010: [Congress for the New Urbanism \(CNU\)](#) (Atlanta, USA)

24-26 May 2010: [2nd World Forum Against Drugs](#) (Stockholm)

June 25-26 2010: [Aging and Sleep 2010](#) (Lyon, France)

June 28th - July 1st 2010: [9th Annual International Conference on Health Economics, Management & Policy](#)

11 - 15 July 2010: [International Congress on Obesity](#) (Stockholm)

11 - 15 July 2010: [IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion: Health, Equity and Sustainable Development](#) (Geneva)

21 October 2010: [EU Health Policy Forum](#) (Brussels)

10 - 13 November 2010: [2010 EUPHA conference](#) (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

in new markets and with innovative services and products. The deadline for responding to this consultation is 15 January 2010.

You can access the full consultation document [here](#).

## Towards a new action plan for antibiotics

Concern about antibiotic resistance has led health ministers to call on the European Commission to develop plans to help diminish this resistance, and to offer incentives for the development of new effective antibiotics, including ways to secure their rational use. Ministers are concerned that common infectious diseases may again become lethal threats.

Ministers stress that these plans should be complemented by regular monitoring and reporting on the public health need for new antibiotics, based on factors such as the characterisation of new resistant pathogens.

[http://www.council.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/111608.pdf](http://www.council.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/111608.pdf)

## EU wants more done to tackle danger of excessive drinking

Tackling the effects of excessive alcohol consumption has also been a recent topic for EU health ministers, who have called for more effective action based on the priority areas identified in the EU Alcohol Strategy:

- protect young people, children and the unborn child
- reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road accidents
- Prevent alcohol-related harm among adults and reduce the negative impact on the workplace
- inform, educate and raise awareness on the impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption
- develop and maintain a common evidence base at EU level

Governments have been urged to develop comprehensive national strategies or action plans tailored to national needs, and to report on developments and results to the European Commission by 2011.

[http://www.council.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/111638.pdf](http://www.council.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/111638.pdf)

## EU Alcohol Forum meets and plans ahead

Meanwhile, the multi stakeholder EU Alcohol & Health Forum has held its fifth plenary session which included reports on marketing, young people and the evidence base, where it was noted that evidence may be lacking on some education issues. An open Forum will be held on 22 April 2010 (which clashes with the Spanish Presidency event on health inequalities).

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol/Forum/docs/ev\\_20091112\\_mi\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/Forum/docs/ev_20091112_mi_en.pdf)

## What role for the EU in global health?

Priorities needed for strengthening the role of the EU as a global health actor were discussed at a conference organised by the Swedish Presidency, the Karolinska Institutet and Global Health Europe. This should include developing local capacity to act, the development of Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and improving logistics and local supply, the conference was told.

Social determinants of health and health in all policies were also highlighted as part of the priorities promoted by the European Commission. EuroHealthNet has issued a response to the European Commission consultation on global health, which can be downloaded from [here](#).

## Tackling tobacco consumption

The European Commission has presented a report on measures taken to prevent smoking and to improve tobacco control. The information in the report is based on a questionnaire sent to EU Member States in 2007, and follows on from the ratification by the Commission and national

governments of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

The report says that there has been considerable progress in implementing requirements to verify the minimum age for the purchase of tobacco products, the introduction of measures to restrict the use of vending machines by under-age people and the protection from environmental smoke in educational establishments, health care facilities and public transport. However, more needs to be done to increase the price of tobacco products to discourage tobacco consumption.

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/Documents/tobacco\\_report09\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/Documents/tobacco_report09_en.pdf)

## Connecting climate change and social justice

The King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) has launched a project which brings together European stakeholders in climate change and social justice to consider how to develop a joint approach which combines effective measures to fight climate change with social justice in Europe.

A series of recommendations, based on the links between social justice and climate change mitigation policies, are to be submitted by the King Baudouin Foundation to the Belgian Government, in the framework of the Belgian EU Presidency in 2010, and to a number of EU authorities, including the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

These recommendations will now go through a consultation process via through an online interactive platform which will be live from 18 January 2010.

<http://www.kbs-frb.be/pressitem.aspx?id=255632&LangType=1033>

## Brighter future for energy efficiency

A long-awaited regulation on labelling is part of the latest attempt by the EU to bring about greater energy efficiency. Decision-makers have agreed on measures to raise consumer awareness of the energy performance of various appliances such as refrigerators and freezers, televisions and washing machines.

The Energy Labelling Directive means that manufacturers of these products will have to indicate the energy consumption irrespective of whether the product performs well ("A"), or poorly ("G").

An agreement has also been reached on the updated Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, originally adopted in 2002, means that all new buildings in the EU will have to meet high energy standards. All buildings built after 31 December 2020 must be powered to a large extent by renewable energy, while public authorities will have to meet these requirements two years earlier.

<http://equitychannel.net/blog/energy-efficient-homes-are-healthy-homes>

## Helping people with disabilities to become more independent

"Nothing about us without us" was the slogan of the annual conference organized by the European Disability Centre and the European Commission directorate-general for Employment, Social Affairs and Equality to mark the European Day of People with Disabilities. The main focus of this year's conference was how to create the right conditions which enable people with disabilities to live independent lives.

Better understanding of issues such as economic autonomy, community services and assistive technologies, was a main theme of the talks, and the outcomes will be taken into consideration for the new European Disability Strategy, due in 2010. The event follows on from the ratification by the Council of the EU of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first international legally binding instrument establishing minimum standards for the protection and safeguarding of a full range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of persons with disabilities around the world.

<http://www.vleva.eu/content/5018>

## Serotonin linked to diabetes, say scientists

A team of EU researchers has studied the role of the hormone serotonin, which is stored in the pancreas along with insulin, to see if its absence had any effect on insulin production. Their results showed that the absence of serotonin in the pancreas of mice led to their rapidly developing diabetes. The findings have been published in the journal Public Library of Science (PLoS) Biology.

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article\\_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article\\_09\\_11\\_18\\_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=13793](http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article_09_11_18_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=13793)

## National news

### FRANCE: INPES provides expertise to future regional health chiefs

The French National Institute for Health Promotion and Education is providing expertise for the newly-established regional health agencies that have been set up around the country.

INPES has produced three books for future heads of these regional bodies: on the reduction of social and health inequalities, on delivering an equitable approach to cure and prevention of illness and enhancing the skills base of people working in public health. Tackling health inequalities is seen as a particularly important theme. "This subject is becoming a national priority, and is at the heart of the INPES strategy," said INPES Director-General Thanh Le Luong. "Even if prevention is improving the health of the population as a whole, it is not reaching those most in need."

<http://www.inpes.sante.fr/>

### SWEDEN: Gambling problems affect social gradient in health

People who have gambling problems can be seen to have more ill-health, more smoking and a larger extent of risky alcohol consumption compared to those without gambling problems, according to a new report on gambling and health published by the Swedish National Institute of Public Health.

Problem gambling is prevalent in all segments of the population and in all forms of gambling, but is unevenly distributed. Most affected are young and middle aged men and men with part time work or sickness benefit/early retirement pension. Among the problem gamblers almost one in seven has severe gambling problems which may require treatment.

<http://www.fhi.se/PageFiles/8065/gambling-motivation-a-review.pdf>

### UK: North West Health Brussels Office celebrates 5 years, looks to future priorities

The North West Health Brussels Office has launched a publication called 'The North West health community: Five years at the heart of the EU 2004-2009' which takes a look back over the 5 years that the office has been in operation in the Brussels context, highlighting some of the main successes of the Brussels team during that time. The publication is available online [here](#).

North West Health Brussels Office has also produced guidelines for policymakers about where the focus should be when it comes to improve health in the North West. Called 'Prioritise our Health: 10 Areas for Action', this fact sheet is available on the North West Brussels Office website at [www.northwesthealth.eu](http://www.northwesthealth.eu)

### SCOTLAND: New data reveals greater gaps in life expectancy

The Scottish Public Health Observatory has updated its updated information on trends for life expectancy (LE) and healthy life expectancy (HLE) from 1980 to 2008 for Scotland, and from 1999-00 to 2007-08 by deprivation quintile.

The most recent data shows that LE and HLE at birth in Scotland have both improved over recent years, but the gap between them (the years expected to be spent in 'not good' health during the average lifetime) has also tended to increase, particularly for males.

<http://www.scotpho.org.uk/hle/>

### SCOTLAND: report on health of ethnic minority groups (correction)

The last edition of Health Highlights referred to a new report on improving the health of ethnic minority groups, "Health in our Multi-ethnic Scotland", published by NHS Health Scotland.

The link provided pointed to an older document. The correct report is available here:

<http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/3768.aspx>

Our apologies for any inconvenience caused.

## Other international news

### Cracking the nut of health equity

We would like to remind readers about a unique communications tool which aims to bring together stakeholders and bodies working in sectors that can have a positive effect on the social and economic determinants of health and can therefore help to improve health equity.

On our website, [www.equitychannel.net](http://www.equitychannel.net), you can now sign up for an online community that allows you to:

- Have direct access to first-hand information regarding the latest EU policy developments affecting health and equity;
- Have your say at the Equity Channel forum;
- Share evidence and knowledge with people working in your field and outside your sector;
- Connect with others from all over the world working on health equity;
- Stay Informed by receiving the latest updates about work on the social and economic determinants of health.

Sign up to the Equity Channel community at <http://www.equitychannel.net>

### Finances of global health need fixing, says report

The state of global health finance is described in an article in the journal "Health Policy and Planning", written by academics from University College London and the University of Oxford.

The paper addresses both government and private sources of finance, and raises and discusses a number of policy issues related to global health governance. The authors refer to the "fragmented, complicated, messy and inadequately tracked state of global health finance" which "requires immediate attention".

<http://heapol.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/24/6/407>

### Conference meets to discuss child obesity

EPODE (Together Let's Prevent Childhood Obesity - Ensemble Prévenons l'Obésité Des Enfants) is a methodology designed to involve all relevant local stakeholders in a prevention program aimed at facilitating the adoption of healthier lifestyles in everyday life.

The Epode European Network (EEN) Symposium was held this month and looked at the implementation of the project in Mexico and the potential for public-private partnerships in the scheme. The EEN website features an interview with Prof. Jaap Seidell, chairman of the EEN committee on "Scientific Evaluation and Dissemination". The full text of the interview is available [here](#). More information about the EEN Symposium is available on [this website](#).

### Eurofound looking for research services

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) has launched a call for expressions of interest (CEI) from the providers of research services.

The fields covered comprise 'employment growth and demand and supply of labour', 'more and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership', 'promoting social inclusion and sustainable social protection' and 'monitoring and survey research activities'.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/about/procurement/cei.htm>

## Measuring the performance of Medi Sys

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published a report evaluating the Medical Information System (MedISys), an information scanning tool developed to reinforce the Network for Surveillance of Communicable diseases and the early detection of bioterrorism activities.

The performance of MedISys was assessed through its timeliness to report specific hazards (i.e. Salmonella, mycotoxins, heavy metals, aluminium, dioxins, melamine, DDT, Vibrio cholera, and radioactivity) selected from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). MedISys timeliness was also compared to ProMED-mail, another internet-scanning system. The initial evaluation suggests MedISys is an efficient tool for the early detection and monitoring of hazards. It tended to detect food and feed hazards earlier, a few days to several weeks in advance, and more frequently than ProMED-mail, but the information retrieved on each system was usually complementary.

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_threats/com/preparedness/docs/efsa\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/com/preparedness/docs/efsa_report.pdf)

## New route needed for better road safety

A bleak picture of road safety has been presented in a new report from the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Region, which outlines the weak road safety management capacity, deteriorated roads, unsafe vehicles and poor driver behaviour among the areas which have contributed to the increasing number road traffic injuries and fatalities.

The report, "Confronting "Death on Wheels" Making Roads Safe in Europe and Central Asia", hopes to encourage the establishment of multisectoral partnerships to address the issue of road safety.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECA/Resources/DeathonWheelsWeb.pdf>

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