

## December



### Calendar of events

#### December

**8-9 December 2010:** [High Level Conference on monitoring and evaluation of EU and MS strategies on nutrition, overweight and obesity](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

**9 December 2010:** [European Strategy for Chronic Conditions – Second Workshop](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

**9 December 2010:** [Priority Medicines for Children](#) (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

**9-10 December 2010:** [Health care rationing Conference](#) (Rotterdam, the Netherlands)

**10 December 2010:** [Current challenges in European RTD Health Programmes](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

**17 December 2010:** [European Year 2010 final conference](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

#### January 2011

**6-7 January 2011:** 12. [Nationale Gesundheitsförderungs-Konferenz](#) (Davos, Switzerland)

**26-28 January 2011:** [Global Risk Assessment Dialogue](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

**26-28 January 2011:** [Workshop on integrated environmental health impact assessment](#) (IEHIA) (Brussels, Belgium)

**27-28 January 2011:** [7e Nationale Congres Gezondheidsbevordering en Preventie](#) (Wageningen, the Netherlands)

#### More online

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

### New Publications

**[Council of the EU]** - Joint Economic Policy Committee – European Commission Report On Health Systems - Country Fiches  
Available [here](#)

**[EC, DG EMPL]** – Investing in well being at work: Addressing psychosocial risks in times of change  
Available [here](#)

Would you like to promote events or new publications of your organisation in health highlights? [Please send us your contributions!](#)

### EU News

#### Meeting of EU health and social ministers: Conclusions from the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs council on 6 and 7 December

The formal meeting of the meeting of ministers during the Belgian Presidency has taken place. The Council discussed the draft directive on maternity leave for the first time since the European Parliament adopted its first-reading position and took note of presidency progress report on the directive on equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Ministers adopted two sets of conclusions concerning gender, one on the implementation of the strategy on equality between women and men, and one on the fight against the gender pay gap. Ministers exchanged views on employment policies in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, and adopted two opinions paving the way for the new governance under the European Semester.

During lunch, ministers discussed the social dimension in the national reform programmes in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. Furthermore, the Council adopted a general approach on a draft decision declaring 2012 as the year of active ageing. Ministers adopted conclusions on the social dimension in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. They held a policy debate on the future of the pensions systems and adopted conclusions on adequate and sustainable pensions. Ministers adopted a declaration on the fight against poverty and social exclusion to mark the closing of the 2010 European Year against poverty and social exclusion. Finally, the Council adopted conclusions on social services of general interest.

On the second day of their meeting, Ministers reached political agreement on the draft regulation on food information to consumers. They exchanged views on the follow up of the lessons learnt from the pandemic A/H1N1, and in particular on the joint procurement of vaccines and antiviral products.

During lunch, ministers exchanged views on the joint report of the Economic Policy Committee on health care systems in Europe.

Furthermore, the Council adopted three sets of conclusions on:

- investing in Europe's health work force for tomorrow: scope for innovation and collaboration;
- innovation and solidarity in pharmaceuticals;
- innovative approaches for chronic diseases.

Please click [here](#) to read the conclusions.

#### EPSCO Council - Information on 'Health' conferences

During the Belgian Presidency and along the lines of the central theme of the Belgian Presidency "Innovation and Solidarity", various conferences were organized. All the information of these events has now been published.

The information includes the following conferences: (1) Ministerial Conference on the Lessons learned from the A(H1N1)2009 Pandemic - *Brussels, 1-2 July*; (2) Ministerial Conference on Investing in Europe's health workforce of tomorrow - *La Hulpe, 9-10 September*; (3) Ministerial Conference on Innovation and Solidarity on Pharmaceuticals - *Brussels, 23-24*

[EC, DG EMPL] – Employment in Europe 2010

Available [here](#)

[EC, DG RESEARCH] – Policy Brief: Faith-Based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities

Available [here](#)

[EC, DG Research] International Cooperation in EU-funded Health Research

Available [here](#)

[European Agency for Health and Safety at Work] – Work-related musculoskeletal disorders in the EU – Facts and figures

Available [here](#)

[European Centre for Disease Control] – Progressing towards TB elimination: A follow-up to the Framework Action Plan to Fight Tuberculosis in the European Union

Available [here](#)

[European Network Against Racism] – Target-setting for improving the socio-economic situation of migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe

Available [here](#)

[WHO] – Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health

Available [here](#)

[WHO/UN-HABITAT] – Hidden cities: unmasking and overcoming health inequities in urban settings

Available [here](#)

[WHO] – The world health report – Health systems financing: the path to universal coverage

Available [here](#)

[ECDC] – Annual epidemiological report on communicable diseases in Europe – 2010

Available [here](#)

[Global Smokefree Partnership] – 2010 Status Report on Article 8

Available [here](#)

[EUROFOUND] – Extending flexicurity – The potential of short-time working schemes: ERM Report 2010.

Available [here](#).

[European Commission, European Research Area] – International Cooperation in EU-funded Health Research.

Available [here](#).

September; (4) Ministerial Conference on Innovative approaches for chronic illnesses in public health and healthcare systems – Brussels, 20 October; (5) Conference on Reducing Health Inequalities from a regional perspective – Genk, 8-9 November; (6) High Level Conference on Improving the quality of life of people with dementia: A challenge for European society – Brussels, 25-26 November; (7) Conferences on a Community Framework relating to Environment and Health: conclusions issued from health and environment key events during the Belgian Presidency – A European framework for health and Environment; (8) High Level Conference on Monitoring and Evaluation of EU and Member States' strategies on nutrition, overweight and obesity related health issues – Brussels, 8-9 December.

Information about all these events organised within the framework of the Belgian Presidency can be found [here](#).

## New EU Health at a Glance report

The European Commission (DG Health and Consumers) jointly with OECD, issued the report "Health at a Glance: Europe 2010". This report provides useful insight into the current situation of health in the EU. The report compiles data from the OECD, Eurostat and the WHO and presents key trends on health, health systems and health spending in the 27 EU Member States, plus the 3 European Free Trade Association countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) and Turkey. Some of the key findings of the report include:

- Life expectancy at birth in the EU increased from 72 years in 1980 to 78 years in 2007.
- There are fewer deaths from heart disease, but it is still the biggest cause of deaths in the EU, accounting for 40% of all deaths in Europe in 2008.
- There is a strong link between the prevalence of dementia and the ageing of the population as the number of people aged over 65 is expected to double between 1995 and 2050.
- The shortage of doctors is a cause for concern in many European countries.
- Health spending has risen in all EU Member States, often increasing at a faster rate than economic growth. In 2008, EU Member States spent, on average, 8.3% of their GDP on health, up from 7.3% in 1998.

The report is available in English, and the executive summary is available also in French. The executive summary will be available in all EU official languages on the European Commission's website.

### Read the report:

European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/health/reports/european>

OECD: [www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance/europe](http://www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance/europe)

European Commission press release: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1674&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>

## Commission launches consultation on active & healthy ageing

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on how Europe could scale up innovation to meet the challenges of the ageing population in Europe, and in particular on a pilot European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing, as set out in the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative.

Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Europeans aged over 65 will rise by nearly 40%, posing huge challenges but also offering great opportunities for Europe's society and economy. The EIP, which the Commission has proposed should be launched in 2011, would seek to meet three goals: to improve the health and quality of life of older people, enabling them to live active and independent lives; to contribute to the sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems; and to foster competitiveness and business opportunities. The online consultation runs until 28 January 2011.

All relevant documents are available [here](#).

## European Commission expert workshops on Healthy Ageing

European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumer Policy invited over 60 experts from across Europe to three one-day workshops which aimed to discuss, explore and create a common vision for healthy ageing in Europe. Common themes emerged, notably the need for a new paradigm to recognise the complexity of ageing and what that means for our health and healthcare systems. The outcomes are summarised in this short Reflections Paper.

The reflections paper is available on the DG SANCO [website](#). Caroline Costongs participated in these workshops on behalf of EuroHealthNet and for additional information please contact Caroline via [c.costongs@eurohealthnet.eu](mailto:c.costongs@eurohealthnet.eu).

### **Conference on Improving the quality of life of people with dementia**

On November 25-26, representatives of Member States and patients organisations met in Brussels at a European conference organised by the Belgian European Presidency, in collaboration with the King Baudouin Foundation on 'Improving the quality of life of people with dementia: a challenge for European society'.

This high-level conference aimed to identify good practices and interesting initiatives and facilitate their exchange between Member States, associations and experts. The conference identified four main principles to be taken into account to improve the care of patients suffering from dementia: the recognition of and support to the informal caregiver, the continuity of care, the importance of care adapted to the patient and the importance of collaboration between all health professionals involved.

### **Council conclusions on the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion...**

The Council has adopted conclusions which consider the importance of incorporating a cultural dimension into national and European policies against poverty and social exclusion. It has therefore invited both the Member States and the European Commission to promote the cross-cutting contribution of culture by, for example, promoting social inclusions through cultural policies, involving stakeholders – including people experiencing poverty – when defining and implementing strategies and policies, and encouraging the preparation of local projects that link programmes for social inclusion with cultural programmes.

Council Conclusions on the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion can be found [here](#).

### **...and on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion**

The Council has adopted its conclusions on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion, which recognizes that sport plays a strong societal role and has the potential for social inclusion in and through sport. Inclusion in sport involves a combination of "sport for all", equal access to sport, equal opportunities in sport, and varied demand-oriented sporting opportunities and sport facilities. Additionally, it involves inclusive participation in society, community development and strengthened social cohesion.

In its conclusions, the Council has identified the following common priorities with a view to promoting social inclusion in and through sport: to support the "Sport for All" principle based on equal access and equal opportunities, especially for physically inactive people and people from disadvantaged backgrounds; to make better use of the potential of sport as a contribution to community building, social cohesion and inclusive growth; and to support the transnational exchange of strategies and methodologies to make better use of the potential of sport for social inclusion on a national and European level.

The Council conclusions on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion can be found [here](#).

### **Council resolution on the EU structured dialogue on sport**

The Council has adopted a resolution that agrees that the Presidency of the Council should, on a regular basis, convene an informal meeting of representatives of the EU public authorities and the sports movement with the aim of exchanging views on sporting issues in the EU. The

Presidency should establish an agenda prior to each meeting that focuses particularly on the issues addressed or to be addressed in recent or forthcoming Council meetings and invite only a limited number of participants to the meeting, to ensure balanced participation from the EU public authorities and representatives of the (EU) sports movement. Additionally, representatives of the Council, the Commission and the Parliament should be invited.

Click [here](#) to access the Council resolution on the EU structure dialogue on sport.

### **Council conclusions on education for sustainable development**

In order to encourage the further development and implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and its integration into the education and training system, the Council has formulated several measures. These include the need for ESD to become a feature of national lifelong learning strategies aimed at citizen's personal, social, professional development; to mainstream ESD into curricula; and to promote and support a 'whole-school' approach to ESD. Additionally the Council has invited the Commission to organise peer learning activities on specific aspects of ESD, with a view to develop a policy handbook and guidelines for educational establishments and teachers.

Please click [here](#) to access the results of the education, youth, culture and sport Council meeting on education for sustainable development.

### **Council conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights**

The Council of the European Union has adopted conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights, which underlines the crucial importance of work undertaken in this area. The Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to adopt a new Communication in this area, setting off a strategy for the EU on the rights of the child. It therefore encourages Member States to cooperate and actively take role in this field, and in future international meetings at both expert and ministerial level dealing with children's rights.

The Council conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights can be found [here](#).

### **Council of Ministers acts against adverse effects of medicines**

The Council of Ministers has adopted a regulation and a directive aimed at strengthening the EU system for the safety monitoring of medicinal products for human use ("pharmacovigilance"), to better protect public health. The EU pharmacovigilance system seeks to detect, assess and prevent adverse effects of medicinal products placed on the market in the European Union. It also ensures that any product, which presents an unacceptable level of risk, can be rapidly withdrawn from the market.

For more information about the directive, click [here](#).

### **European Parliament adopts proposals on information on medical products**

The European Parliament has adopted proposals on information to the general public on medicinal products for human use subject to medical prescription. The proposals will now proceed through the other EU institutions for formal agreement before being implemented.

Additional information is available [here](#).

### **An Agenda for new skills and jobs, a European contribution towards full employment**

The European Commission has released a new plan setting out action to reach 75% employment target for the EU by 2020. "The agenda for new skills and jobs" aims to make labour markets more flexible, give workers the skills they need, improve working conditions and create jobs.

Today, 10% of 20 to 64 year olds – some 23 million people – are unemployed and estimates

show that by 2015, the EU will lack 2.7 million skilled workers in the IT, health and research sectors. The ageing trend of the EU population makes the situation even more complex as the percentage of those in work must increase to offset both the large number of retirements expected in the next few years and the number of jobs lost during the recession.

The Commission's agenda includes four priorities: Modernizing job markets, Matching skills to jobs, Improving job quality and working conditions and Creating jobs

For more information about the Commission's plan, click [here](#)

### **DG Employment - Study on social impact assessment**

A new study report has been published by the European Commission called: "*Social Impact Assessment as a tool for mainstreaming social inclusion and social protection concerns in public policy in EU Member States*", which aims to lead to better informed, more evidence-based political decisions.

The study describes, compares, and analyses the different ways in which social impact assessment is currently carried out in the EU Member States. On basis of this analysis, it draws recommendations for the implementation of effective social impact assessment systems and for effective social impact analysis.

Click [here](#) for further information about this study.

### **Belgian Presidency hosts a convention to discuss UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities**

Persons with disabilities from all over Europe have debated with the authorities about the progress that has been made with regard to the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention marks a turning point in the policies for persons with disabilities. All of the provisions of the Convention guarantee them the enjoyment of their human rights in the same way as all other citizens. 16 out of the 27 Member States of the European Union have already ratified the Convention. EU Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding and the representatives of the civil society hope that the European Union and all the Member States that have not yet adopted the Convention do this as soon as possible.

More information regarding the outcomes of the conference and to access to the presentations is available [here](#).

### **Equality summit: ETUC and EPSU call for equality and social inclusion to be back on the EU agenda**

The 4th EU Equality Summit, held on 15-16 November in Brussels and organised by the Belgian Presidency with the support of the European Commission, focused on equality and diversity at the workplace following the introduction of an EU legal ban on discrimination 10 years ago. Building upon the gender equality legislation, the 2000 EU directive bans discrimination in employment on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion.

Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium, Joëlle Milquet made 10 recommendations that will be on the agenda of the next Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO). Mrs. Milquet also encouraged EU social partners to negotiate a framework of actions on equality and diversity. Such a framework will aim to promote and achieve an inclusive workplace, based on equal treatment and competence development.

For more information, please contact Mr. [Pablo Sanchez](#) at the European Public Service Union (EPSU). A note prepared by the Belgian Presidency about the Equality summit can be found [here](#).

### **Commission publishes two new reports on health and the environment**

DG Environment has published two new reports on how the environment can have an impact on health. The first report, "*Reducing black carbon emissions benefit both climate and health*" suggests that reducing black carbon emissions, produced by burning carbon-based materials,

would prevent millions of premature deaths in developing countries as well as helping meet climate change mitigation targets.

The second report, "*Climate impacts on air pollution could increase respiratory disease*" shows that evidence from modelling studies suggest that climate change is likely to increase concentrations of ozone, one of the most important urban air pollutants responsible for respiratory problems. Under this assumption, rapid reductions of emissions from fossil fuel burning are needed to protect the health of both current and future generations.

The report "Reducing black carbon emissions benefit both climate and health" can be downloaded [here](#). The second article, "Climate impacts on air pollution could increase respiratory disease" can be found [here](#).

### **Commission outlines blueprint for CAP after 2013**

The European Commission has published a Communication on "*the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) towards 2020 – Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future*". The reform aims at making the European agriculture sector more dynamic, competitive, and effective in responding to the Europe 2020 vision of stimulating sustainable growth, smart growth and inclusive growth. The paper outlines three options for further reform. Following discussion of these ideas, the Commission will present formal legislative proposals in mid-2011.

Earlier in the year, the Commission held a public debate on the future of the CAP. The vast majority of contributions identified 3 principal objectives from the CAP: (1) Viable food production; (2) Sustainable management of natural resources and climate action and (3) maintaining the territorial balance and diversity of rural areas. This Communication looks at the future instruments that might be suitable for best achieving these objectives.

Please visit the [website](#) of DG Agriculture and Rural Development for further information.

### **Orientation paper on measures needed to further develop the Innovation Union in all its aspects**

The Europe 2020 strategy has reconfirmed the importance of research and innovation to ensure rapid recovery from the crisis and building a sustainable economic and societal future for Europe. Europe 2020's priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and the accompanying 5 headline objectives, are currently being further developed into 7 flagship initiatives. The Commission's proposals for the Innovation Union flagship initiative has been published in October 2010. Against this background, an orientation paper has been produced by DG Research to help set the scene for the new programme by reviewing the European research and innovation landscape, lessons learned from FP7 (including its interim evaluation), and recall external policy drivers. This will provide the context for a series of questions addressing the key issues that will shape FP8, and the achievement of the European research Area.

To download the orientation paper, click [here](#).

### **Expert group evaluates 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme**

The Interim Evaluation of the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for Research, which was carried out by a Group of Experts chaired by Rolf Annerberg, Director General of the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Research and Spatial Planning (FORMAS), has been completed. The report was presented to EU Commissioner for Research Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, and the Commission is now analysing the report in detail and will respond in the weeks to come.

The report provides a detailed assessment of the implementation of FP7 so far and presents 10 recommendations for improvements: (1) Advance the European Research Area and Innovation Union objectives; (2) Develop and implement high quality research infrastructures; (3) Maintain, at least, the level of funding; (4) Encourage participation from a broad spectrum of small and large enterprises, universities and research and technology organisations through a well-articulated innovation strategy; (5) Achieve a quantum leap with simplification; the Commission is asked to move to a more trust-based and risk-tolerant approach; (6) Give greater emphasis to open calls in the remaining years of FP7; (7) Consider a moratorium on

new instruments until the existing ones have been sufficiently developed and adequately evaluated; (8) Take further steps to increase female participation in FP7; (9) Build connections between the FP and Structural Funds for increased participation from Member States that are under-represented; and (10) Carry out a review based upon a thorough analysis of the current strategy towards international cooperation.

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

### **World governments show unity against tobacco industry and agree to new tobacco-control measures**

Parties to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) unanimously adopted, during the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP4), a number of decisions which strengthen tobacco-control efforts worldwide. In response, Parties to the Convention adopted a Declaration proposed by the host country, Uruguay, reaffirming their strong commitment to prioritize health measures and to exchange information on the industry's activities which attempt to interfere with the implementation of public health policies.

The Uruguay meeting reviewed the progress in implementation of the Convention and adopted new guidelines that provide further direction to Parties on how to implement several of treaty's provisions. The Conference decided that (1) flavouring ingredients that increase attractiveness of tobacco products should be regulated in order to reduce the number of new smokers, especially among youth; (2) smoking cessation services should be integrated into national health systems to make them more available for increasing number of smokers who wish to quit; and (3) parties should establish an infrastructure and build capacity to support education, communication and training, thereby raising public awareness and promoting social change.

Additionally, the report on price and taxation policy of tobacco products was discussed and delegations agreed to establish a working group tasked with further work and possibly preparing the guidelines for implementation. The work on economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing will be extended in order to find appropriate policy options and recommendations. The delegations also decided that negotiations on a protocol to combat illicit trade in tobacco products should continue with the aim of completion in 2012.

Further information on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control can be found [here](#).

### **HELP - For a life without tobacco**

The latest report of the EU Help Campaign to discourage smoking, HELP 2.0 (2009-2010), has been published.

**See the report: [Help - For a life without tobacco - A legacy](#)**

### **Scientific Committee Publishes Opinion on Tobacco Additives**

The Commission's independent Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks has published its opinion on the role of tobacco additives, such as flavours and sugar, in shaping the addictiveness and attractiveness of tobacco products. The Committee concludes that additives and design characteristics may modify consumption patterns, in a way which may impact on the uptake of tobacco and in the development of dependence. For example, additives which facilitate deeper inhalation may indirectly enhance the addictiveness of nicotine.

This Opinion will be taken into consideration for the revision of the Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC). A public consultation on this revision is ongoing and all interested parties are invited to submit their comments by 17 December 2010.

The full opinion is available [here](#). Further details on the consultation can be found [here](#).

### **The ENSP Total Ban with No Exceptions Declaration**

The European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP) has published a position paper on environmental tobacco smoke and the total ban of smoking in all enclosed public

areas without exception.

The dangerous health effects of second-hand smoke have been documented in numerous reports, ranging from that of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to the US Surgeon General's. A cautious estimate is that exposure to second-hand smoke kills at least 79,000 people in the EU each year. This estimate includes deaths due to lung cancer, coronary heart disease, stroke, chronic non-neoplastic respiratory disease. However, this figure does not include deaths in childhood caused by second-hand smoke and the significant morbidity, both acute and chronic, caused by second-hand smoke. In the European Union 24% of those working indoors are exposed to tobacco smoke at the workplace and 5% are exposed to more than five hours of tobacco smoke at work every day.

Please visit the [website](#) of the ENSP for further information.

### **ECDC Annual Epidemiological Report 2010 on Communicable Diseases in Europe**

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) released the fourth edition of its Annual Epidemiological Report on Communicable Diseases in Europe. The publication provides a comprehensive summary of surveillance data for 2008 and shows that EU citizens, in general, enjoy a high level of protection against infectious diseases. Nonetheless, as in previous years, Europe continues to face challenges: the growing resistance of microbes to the most widely used antibiotics; disease outbreaks in healthcare settings such as hospitals and care homes; rising rates of sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV and Chlamydia; and a significant burden of illness and death caused by respiratory tract infections.

To download the report, please click [here](#).

### **EU to ban chemical in baby bottles**

The European Commission has approved a ban on the use of Bisphenol-A (BPA) in the manufacture and sale of plastic baby bottles. Taking effect from January 2011, a Commission spokesperson said the proposal had received approval from a committee of national government experts, months earlier than scheduled. The European parliament had called for the ban in June.

The chemical is widely used in making hard, clear plastic and is commonly found in food and drink containers. BPA has been linked to cancer, obesity and the early onset of puberty but the risks are still disputed. There has been some concern over the use of BPA for some time, with six US manufacturers removing it from bottles they sold in the US in 2009.

For more information please click [here](#).

### **Commission invites scientists to join its Database of Experts serving the Risk Assessment Advisory Structure**

In order to support the work of the Committees, the European Commission has set up and manages a Database of Experts. This Database is permanently open to scientists who wish to contribute to the work of the Scientific Committees on an ad hoc basis, on specific issues, as members of working groups or on the occasion of scientific hearings and workshops.

For more information on the database of experts please visit the DG Health and Consumer [website](#).

### **European Parliament says hazardous substances should be labelled better**

The Internal Market Committee has voted to update current EU rules on the marketing of construction products containing hazardous substances to ensure a high standard of health and safety protection for construction workers. The committee also stresses the need to protect the environment and promote recycling of construction products, in line with existing EU directives and regulations, in order meet EU climate change targets.

For information please visit the European Parliaments [website](#).

## **European countries set targets on access to safe and affordable water and sanitation**

Reducing economic barriers to access to safe drinking-water is one of the key objectives of the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, held in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives from 34 European countries, including both Parties and non-Parties to the Protocol, met to review their progress in providing cleaner water and better sanitation to more people, especially in times of economic constraint. Water and sanitation bills can threaten strained household incomes, in rich and poor countries alike, hampering access.

Access to an improved water supply and sanitation has in general increased across Europe, resulting in an 80% decrease in diarrhoeal disease in young children from 1995 to 2005. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the rural population in eastern countries still lives in homes that are not connected to a safe drinking-water supply, and this proportion is growing in some countries. Sanitary equipment is insufficient in some areas of Europe, and about 85 million people (including more than 20 million in the lowest-income groups in the EU) still lack toilets in their homes. The Protocol on Water and Health is the first international legal agreement adopted to ensure access to safe drinking-water and the provision of sanitation for everyone.

To get more information about the Protocol, click [here](#).

## **More rights for passengers travelling by bus and coach**

The European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament have reached a final agreement to improve the rights of passengers travelling by bus and coach. The agreement will see the introduction legislation of a set of basic rights including non-discrimination, adequate information to passengers, in particular those with reduced mobility will apply to all passengers. This will include specific assistance free of charge for disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility both at terminals and on board, and, where necessary, transport free of charge for accompanying people.

Additional information is available [here](#).

## **Commission decision on the awarding of grants for proposals for 2010**

DG SANCO has published the Commission decision on the awarding of grants for proposals for 2010 under the second Health Programme (2008-2013). The Decision paper shows that a total of EUR 13 381 725 co-financing is awarded to projects, EUR 627 839 is awarded to conferences, EUR 2 025 160 is awarded to operating grants, and EUR 12 681 662 is awarded to joint actions.

Seven organisations active in the field of public health in the EU will obtain grants that will cover some of their operating costs and nine joint actions with institutions of the Member States will receive European Union financial support. The actions selected for funding cover issues of health security, health information and health promotion. EuroHealthNet will participate as a leading partner in the Joint Action on Health Inequalities entitled Equity Action.

For further information about this Commission decision (C(2010)7593), and to access the (reserve) list of projects, conferences, operating grants and joint actions which (could) receive EU co-financing, please click [here](#). For more information regarding EuroHealthNet's involvement in the Health Inequalities Joint Action please contact Ingrid via [i.stegeman@eurohealthnet.eu](mailto:i.stegeman@eurohealthnet.eu).

## **New Eurobarometer on EU consumers' perceptions of food-related risks**

The majority of Europeans associate food and eating with enjoyment. According to a new Eurobarometer survey, those who are concerned about possible food-related risks tend to worry more about chemical contamination of food rather than bacterial contamination or health and nutrition issues. The poll also showed most Europeans have confidence in national and European food safety agencies as information sources on possible risks associated with food.

When placed in the context of other risks that could personally affect them, more EU citizens ranked the economic crisis (20%) and environmental pollution (18%) as very likely to affect

their lives compared with the possible risk of food damaging their health (11%).

More information can be found on the [website](#) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

### **Joining together to tackle HIV/AIDS in Europe**

On World AIDS Day, 1 December, the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers drew attention to EU funded projects, which bring together people living with HIV, doctors and health personnel, researchers, activists, and policy makers to ensure an adequate response to epidemic. There were 66 actions funded in the framework of the European Health Programme with a total budget allocates of 39.275.358, 91€.

Forty-three actions were funded under the Public Health programme (2003-2007) with EC co-funding of €27 906 357. Twenty-three actions funded under the Second Health Programme (2008-2010) with EC co-funding of €11 369 001.

Please click [here](#) to see a full list of projects tackling HIV/AIDS in Europe. The EAHC projects database can be found [here](#).

### **Global Health Policy Forum**

The draft agenda and related documents for the next Global Health Policy Forum are now available on the DG SANCO [website](#). The meeting will take place on the 16<sup>th</sup> December in Brussels.

### **Parliamentary Handbook: "The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Health MDGs"**

This handbook presents an all-encompassing view of parliamentarians' role in EU decision-making in relation to global health, provides balanced examples of good donor practice, and makes strong recommendations for effective aid and the appropriate priority for health. It contains a guide to existing European commitments to global health and the role of parliamentarians in monitoring delivery of those commitments to the health-related MDGs.

The parliamentary handbook aims to help European parliamentarians to better understand the basics and the importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA), the new global health aid architecture, and the latest global health policies and innovative financing mechanisms.

The EPF Parliamentary Handbook can be found [here](#).

## **Other international news**

### **New WHO guidelines: TB prevention for people with HIV**

The revised guidelines are based on new scientific evidence that updates the previous 1998 policy. The key recommendations assert that 1) all children and adults living with HIV, including pregnant women and those receiving antiretroviral treatment, should receive isoniazid prevention therapy 2) isoniazid should be provided for six to 36 months, or as a life-long treatment in settings with high HIV and TB prevalence and 3) people living with HIV who may have TB symptoms should be further screened for active TB or other conditions so that they are able to access the appropriate treatments.

More information is available on the WHO [website](#).

### **International guidelines to protect health workers against HIV and TB**

New international guidelines have been launched by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Joint United National Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) that address the protection of health workers against HIV and TB. Health workers throughout the world are at risk of occupational exposure to HIV and TB, but often lack adequate access to protection and treatment.

Additional information and the guidelines can be found on the [website](#) of the World Health Organisation. Guidance notes and other ILO materials on HIV and TB prevention at the

workplace can be found [here](#).

### **UNAIDS report highlights significant stabilization or declines rates of HIV infections**

A new UNAIDS report shows that the AIDS epidemic is beginning to change course as the number of people newly infected with HIV is declining and AIDS-related deaths are decreasing. Together, this is contributing to the stabilization of the total number of people living with HIV in the world.

At the end of 2009 an estimated: 33.3 million [31.4 million–35.3 million] people globally were living with HIV; 2.6 million [2.3 million–2.9 million] people became newly infected with HIV; 1.8 million [1.6 million–2.1 million] people died from AIDS-related causes.

The 2010 report contains basic HIV data from 182 countries and includes country-by-country scorecards. It gives new evidence that investments in HIV prevention programming are producing significant results in many of the highest burden countries.

To access the UNAIDS 2010 report, please click [here](#).

### **The Children Left Behind - New report on the most disadvantaged children in rich countries**

UNICEF IRC has launched a new report on poor children in rich countries. Report Card 9 '*The Children Left Behind*' presents a first overview of inequalities in child well-being for 24 OECD countries. The report focuses on the relative gap between children in the bottom of the distribution with those occupying the median. Three dimensions of well-being are examined: material, education, and health. In each case, the question asked is 'how far behind are children being allowed to fall?' and 'why are some countries doing so much better at protecting their most vulnerable children?'

To access the report, click [here](#).

### **Report: Wide inequalities in health are hidden in urban settings**

Health policies in most rapidly urbanising countries remain dominated by disease focused solutions that ignore the social and physical environment, such as the informal urban settlements and slums that are home to about a billion of the world's poor people, says a joint report from the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

As a result, health problems persist, inequities have increased, and interventions have produced less than optimal results, it notes. The report says that urban expansion, with seven in 10 people in the world forecast to be living in cities by 2050, will pose major challenges for public health in the years ahead.

To download the report, click [here](#).

### **Amnesty International's new website: Fight Discrimination in Europe**

On 16 November, the International Day against Intolerance, Amnesty International has launched a new website to support its campaign against discrimination in Europe. The 'Fight Discrimination in Europe' website highlights Amnesty International's work on discrimination in Europe and provides an opportunity for people throughout Europe to speak out and take positive action to combat discrimination.

"Discrimination is rife across Europe with serious impact on people's access to fundamental rights. Governments, institutions and people should take action immediately to stop the detrimental impact that discrimination has on society as a whole", said Nicolas Beger, Director of the European Institutions Office.

Please click [here](#) to visit the new website against discrimination in Europe.

### **European patients have access to new medical technology sooner than American patients**

A new US study shows how patients in Europe are getting access to new therapies an average of two years before patients in the United States, due to regulatory challenges at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The current regulatory environment on medical device innovation in the US was compared versus the EU. Over 200 small and medium sized medical technology companies were surveyed in the US to examine the impact FDA regulatory processes have on innovation, patient care and job-creation.

The full report of this study can be found [here](#).

### **Improving health care efficiency is key to curbing spiralling costs**

Governments must make their health care systems more efficient if they are to maintain quality of care without putting further stress on public finances, according to a new OECD report. In *Health Care Systems: Efficiency and Policy Settings*, the OECD warns that cash-strapped governments no longer have the option of boosting spending to improve health outcomes, as they have done over the past several decades.

The OECD report recognises that the sharp rise in health care spending – which has grown by more than 70% per capita in real terms since the early-1990s – led to steady improvements in health outcomes across the OECD. However, cross-country comparative analysis highlights the uneven health care efficiency performance across the OECD countries. Australia, Japan, Korea, Switzerland and Iceland get the best health outcomes for money spent. Denmark, Greece, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and the United States have the widest margin for improving health outcomes without increasing spending.

Exploiting efficiency gains would allow countries to continue improving the quality of care while holding costs constant, according to the report. Adoption of best practices could reduce costs by nearly 2% of GDP by 2017 across the OECD, as compared to a no-reform scenario, while savings could be above 3% of GDP in Greece, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

For more information about the OECD report, click [here](#).

## **National and local news**

### **Sweden - The Public Health Policy Report 2010: 'Public health of the future – everyone's responsibility'**

The Swedish National Institute of Public Health has prepared, on behalf of the Swedish Government, a second report on the future of public health. The objectives of the report were (1) to show how the conditions for health in Sweden have developed focusing on the period 2004-2009; (2) to present measures undertaken; and (3) to recommend future measures. The report concludes that public health of the future is everyone's business – from the Parliament and the Government to the individual citizen.

The report shows that preventable ill-health costs the Swedish society at least SEK 120 billion per year. To reduce these costs, investments are needed that give people the opportunity to have a good start in life. The Swedish National Institute of Public Health therefore proposes to implement stronger measures that ensure that more students will finish school with passing marks. This will in turn increase the possibilities of finding work and achieving self-sufficiency.

Additionally, the establishments of governmental funds to promote health and prevent illness are needed, which can contribute to long term, good health, and which can boost the economy. Also, a more health-promoting equitable healthcare system is required to reduce the costs for society as well as to improve public health.

The full report is available [here](#). Further information can be found on the [website](#) of the Swedish National Institute of Public Health.

### **Sweden – new book "Physical Activity in the Prevention and Treatment of Disease"**

Nine out of ten primary care centres in Sweden prescribe physical activity and the book *Physical Activity in the Prevention and Treatment of Disease* is often used as a handbook for that. The publication is now available in English for the first time.

Written by 95 experts, the book summarizes the up-to-date scientific knowledge on how to prevent and treat various diseases and conditions on which physical activity has a documented effect. The book was prepared by the editorial board of Professional Associations for Physical Activity, a sub-section of the Swedish Society of Medicine, and it was produced in cooperation with Swedish National Institute of Public Health.

To find more about this book, please click [here](#).

### **The Netherlands - One in 20 hospital deaths could have been prevented**

Around one in 20 hospital deaths are the result of mistakes which could have been prevented, according to new research into patient safety. Two years ago, researchers put the preventable death rate at 4% - or 1,735 people - but the increase is not considered significant, the paper said. The researchers drew their conclusions after studying 4,000 patient files from 20 hospitals. Most problems relate to operations and medicines and patients often die because post operation complications are not noticed quickly enough.

More information is available [here](#).

### **Norwegian and French alcohol regulations are scientifically best founded**

The evaluation of the alcohol marketing regulations of 23 European countries based on scientific evidence based criteria shows that Norway and France have the most effective regulations. This is the conclusion of the FASE project: Focus on Alcohol Safe Environments.

Norway has the most comprehensive volume restriction of Europe; all alcohol marketing is prohibited. In France the most important law embedded restrictions ban the promotion of alcohol on TV and in cinema's, moreover sponsorship of events and sports forbidden.

On this [website](#), one can find all information, reports and outcomes of the FASE project.

### **The government publishes its white paper on public health in England**

'*Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England*' sets out the Government's long-term vision for the future of public health in England. The plans outlined will transform public health and for the first time create a 'wellness' service: 'Public Health England', to meet today's health challenges.

The proposal sets out how local public health leadership and responsibility will be returned to and strengthened within local government. Responding to the challenges set out in Professor Sir Michael Marmot's *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* report, this White Paper includes a proposal for a new, and simple, health premium that will reward progress on specific public health outcomes. Driven by a formula to be developed together with key partners, the premium will represent a new approach to fighting health inequalities. The intention is for the formula to recognise that disadvantaged areas face the greatest challenges, and will therefore receive a greater premium for progress made.

To access the white paper, click [here](#).

### **UK - Britain's wellbeing to be measured**

Prime Minister David Cameron has asked for the nation's wellbeing to be measured for the Government from next April. The announcement follows the June Budget which acknowledged the limitations of GDP in measuring quality of life. Mr Cameron has asked the National Statistician to lead work on developing subjective measures for the first time. Potential indicators include health, levels of education, inequalities in income and the environment.

The Prime Minister's speech on wellbeing is available [here](#).

### **Scotland – 2010 Public Health Observatory health profiles released**

The 2010 health profiles are now available, along with complementary profiles focussing on children and young people. These profiles highlight the considerable variation in health between areas and help identify priorities for health improvement. The profiles give a

snapshot overview of health for each area using spine charts (which show how the area compares to the Scottish average), and allow further understanding of the results via rank charts and trend charts.

To get more information about these documents, please click [here](#).

### **UK - New online training courses for management of children and adults with asthma**

Global education and research charity "Education for Health" has launched a new eLearning resource on asthma, as part of its new eLearning vision. Despite effective treatments and comprehensive clinical guidelines, asthma morbidity and mortality remains unacceptably high throughout the world. These new online study modules equip healthcare professionals at all levels with the knowledge and expertise to meet the challenges of asthma.

More information can be found on the [website](#) of Education for Health.

### **UK - Plans in place to transform Community Services**

NHS staff across England are taking control of the community services they deliver in a drive to improve outcomes for patients and transform patient care, according to a press release by the Department of Health. From April next year, all Primary Care Trusts should have separated the commissioning of community services from their provision. All staff and services will be transferred to a range of new organisations such as aspirant Community Foundation Trusts and Social Enterprises, or integrate with existing providers. This is part of the Transforming Community Services programme which will deliver more personalised care closer to home.

For further information, please visit the [website](#) of the Department of Health.

## **Season's Greetings to all readers**

This will be the last *Health Highlights* of 2010: thanks for all your positive comments this year. We wish all readers a healthy and happy festive period and look forward to serving you again in 2011. The EuroHealthNet Brussels office will be closed 24 December until 4 January and our next issue will be sent to you in mid January.

### **Using Health Highlights**

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