

EU Health Highlights

News about health in the EU from EuroHealthNet Brussels Office

May 2008

1. Main Stories

- ***New Health Commissioner starts work***

The European Parliament has voted in favour of approving the new Cypriot Commissioner Androula Vassiliou for Public Health, Food Safety, Animal Health and Welfare, with 446 votes in favour, 7 against and 29 abstentions. A new Commissioner is needed following the resignation of fellow Cypriot Markos Kyprianou, who left to take up the post of foreign minister in the new Cypriot government. Ms Vassiliou was nominated by the Cypriot government and the Council of the European Union has already given its support to her nomination.

Now appointed, Ms Vassiliou will be in office at least until the appointment of a new Commission after the June 2009 European Parliament elections. During an earlier hearing in front of MEPs Ms Vassiliou stressed that health inequities will pose one of the biggest European challenges over the next five years and promised “within the coming months” the long awaited EU proposal on cross-border health care. This is now expected to be proposed by the July recess.

Responses to written questions:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/commission/2008/questionnaires/specific_en.pdf

Further information on the Hearing:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings/commission/2008/default_en.htm

- ***Protecting health from climate change on World Health Day ...***

The theme for World Health Day 2008 was a political priority in Brussels: the link between climate change and health. Changing climate will inevitably affect the basic requirements for maintaining health: clean air and water, sufficient food and adequate shelter. Each year, about 800 000 people die from causes attributable to urban air pollution, 1.8 million from diarrhoea largely resulting from lack of access to clean water supply and sanitation, and from poor hygiene, 3.5 million from malnutrition and approximately 60 000 in natural disasters.

In the long run, however, the greatest health impacts may be from the gradual build-up of pressure on the natural, economic and social systems that sustain health, and which are already under stress in much of the developing world, and increasingly in Europe. These gradual stresses include reductions and seasonal changes in the availability of fresh water, regional drops in food production, and rising sea levels. Each of these changes has the potential to force population displacement and increase the risks of civil conflict.

<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/en/index.html>

- **...And action to do something about it**

Addressing the public health challenge presented by climate change and high carbon lifestyles requires local and regional action. That is why, on the occasion of this year's World Health Day 2008: protecting health from climate change, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and the European REGIONAL Health Authorities (EUREGHA) network jointly launched a Good Practice Award for local and regional projects that simultaneously promote human health and protect the climate.

The competition has two awards categories: climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation, aiming to showcase health focused projects where establishments have reduced their carbon footprint or are preparing themselves for the inevitable changes that climate change will bring. Eligible participants include local and regional health, environment, energy and transport authorities, health care establishments, and academic institutions.

For more information see: <http://www.env-health.org/climatechangeawards>

- **High level action builds up on alcohol policy...**

The Slovenian Minister of Health, Zofija Mazej Kukovič, addressed the European alcohol policy conference "*Building Capacity for Action*" in Barcelona. The conference was part of the Building Capacity project in the area of alcohol, which is managed by Slovenia and is partly financed by the European Commission. EuroHealthNet's Clive Needle also addressed the closing session of the conference on future outlooks.

The project includes 41 partnership organisations and is based on the EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm. The aim of the project is to reduce inequalities between the Member States and to achieve the Lisbon objectives in the sense of reducing social exclusion due to alcohol abuse and emphasising the significant role of alcohol policy for a more capable and economically productive Europe.

More information is available on the website

<http://www.ias.org.uk/buildingcapacity/conference/index.html>

- **...While the EC Alcohol and Health Forum gathers pace**

EuroHealthNet participated in an extended Open Forum considering progress at EU levels on alcohol policy, which followed a plenary meeting of the Forum in Brussels. Details including presentations and commitments updates are available via

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/Forum/alcohol_forum_en.htm

2. News from the European Institutions

- ***Strategic Planning progress***

The Commission's Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General published a synopsis report detailing the results of the external consultation on its "*Future Challenges paper 2009-2014*". A major conference to complete this work will be held in October in Brussels, at which EuroHealthNet will be represented. The synopsis, along with individual contributions, is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/events/future_challenges_en.htm

- ***Diet Platform plenary meeting***

EuroHealthNet was represented at the recent meeting of the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity & Health. A full report has been provided to network members, but general information, reports and presentations made are available via:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/platform_en.htm

- ***Launch of "IA TOOLS" website to the public***

The EC Joint Research Centre has opened the Impact Assessment tools website, IA TOOLS, to the public. This online platform provides policy actors and impact assessment practitioners throughout Europe with a repository of guidance, information and best practices for impact assessment of new policies and legislative measures.

The IA TOOLS website provides experts and non-experts with guidance on the main steps to be followed to perform an impact assessment. It contains an inventory of social, economic and environmental impact indicators. It also offers a comprehensive picture of the qualitative and quantitative tools available for the analysis of policy impact and access to up-to-date databases.

IA TOOLS was developed for internal use by the European Commission following the approach and structure of the Impact Assessment Guidelines. It supports desk officers in producing high quality Impact Assessments. Experience has shown that IA TOOLS can provide added value to impact assessment practitioners in the Member States and in other organisations and in response to frequent request from consultants and experts outside the Commission.

Consequently the website has now been opened to the public.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=1410&obj_id=4560&dt_code=NWS&lang=en

- ***Exercising everyday keeps the doctor away***

The health benefits of regular exercise are well known and are commonly featured in public awareness campaigns. Now, recent research has revealed just how dangerous a lack of physical activity can be to the human body. One of the most repeated pieces of medical advice given today is that people should do at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week..

New research conducted on both sides of the Atlantic has confirmed the verity of this advice. It found that the absence of regular physical exercise is an actual cause of many of the risk factors associated with chronic diseases, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The study combined the knowledge of experts from the University of Copenhagen and the Missouri-Columbia College of Veterinary Medicine. It was conducted as part of EXGENESIS, a project financed through the 'Life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health' thematic area of the EU Sixth Framework Research Programme (FP6).

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/lifesciences/exgenesis/>

- ***"Health Check" of the Common Agricultural Policy***

The EC has announced significant proposals to change subsidies and grants to agricultural producers, farmers and rural development programmes. Known as the CAP Health check but in reality about food production, the controversial plans will now be the subject of hot political debate across Europe. The Commission has proposed modifications of three main areas:

- Direct aid system
- Market instruments
- Rural development policy

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm

- ***CAP reform: ministers agree wine reform***

The Council of Ministers has formally adopted a wide-ranging reform of the Common Market Organisation for wine, on which agriculture ministers reached a political agreement in December. The changes aim to boost the competitiveness of European wines. The reform provides for a fast restructuring of the wine sector in that it includes a voluntary, three-year grubbing-up scheme to provide an alternative for uncompetitive producers and to remove surplus and uncompetitive wine from the market. The reforms will enter into force from 1 August 2008

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/656&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

3. News from Member States / Organisations

- ***Nordic Public Health Conference aims high***

The 9th Nordic Public Health Conference will take place from 9-12 June in Östersund, Sweden. The aim of the conference is to show the potential public health work has of contributing to health and social and economic development, from a local and regional perspective. Beyond the main theme of “*Invest in Public Health – for a fairer and more sustainable future,*” the conference will have three sub-themes:

- Health, economy and regional and local development
- Evidence-based theories and methods in public health work
- Public health strategies for health promotion and the prevention of disease and ill health

www.nordiska2008.fhi.se

- ***Renewed Swedish Public Health Bill up for Parliament consideration***

Children, young people and the elderly are especially targeted groups as the Swedish government presents a new public health bill to parliament. The government has allocated 115 million SEK (12 million EURO) annually until 2010 for public health work. The grant is intended to strengthen support to parents, work with suicide prevention as well as activities that promote sound eating habits, increased physical activity and reduced tobacco use.

The bill emphasizes the opportunities and responsibilities of the individual. The public sector is important to convey knowledge in the public health field. Voluntary organizations are given particular consideration in the bill and a scheme to support local and regional health is introduced.

The overarching aim of Sweden’s national public health policy remains unchanged. The aim is to create social conditions that will ensure good health, on equal terms, for the entire population. The 11 public health objective domains, found in the previous public health bill, are re-written although the core meaning is left unchanged.

http://www.fhi.se/templates/page_13113.aspx

- ***First Ever World Forum Against Drugs to take place in Stockholm in September***

The first ever World Forum Against Drugs, WFAD, will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, September 8-10, 2008. It will be an opportunity for people from all over the world working against illicit drugs, especially at grass-roots level, to exchange ideas and share experiences on the development of methods in order to move toward the vision of a world free from drug abuse.

The main theme for WFAD is 'One Hundred Years of Drug Prevention', with a variety of sub-themes, including Drugs for War, The Role of Public Opinion, Drug-free Treatment and the Environment and Drugs. Prominent people from around the world within the field of anti-drug work, as well as people working practically with local projects, will be found among the speakers at WFAD.

More information about WFAD can be found at: www.wfad08.org

- **Unique Report States That Disabled Swedes are 10 Times More Vulnerable to Poor Health**

In the Swedish National Institute of Public Health's latest report, poor health turns out to be more than ten times more common among individuals with disabilities compared to the rest of the Swedish population. Swedes with disabilities more often have little education and are worse off financially compared to the rest of the population. The ratio of working professionals is also significantly lower among the disabled. There is a social gap between disabled individuals and the rest of the population that does not appear to be closing.

For understandable reasons, there is a direct relationship between disability and impaired health in many cases. But the picture that comes to light in the report is that impaired health is far more common than it need be. The report concludes that health can be improved for persons with disabilities by increasing social participation, decreasing obesity, increasing physical activity, improving the financial conditions and decreasing discrimination. In order to manage this, public health work must include persons with disabilities more clearly than before.

Contact person: Ylva Arnhof E-mail: ylva.arnhof@fhi.se

Read more about the Report in the Abstract (Summary in English only)

http://www.fhi.se/upload/ar2008/rapporter_2008/Onodig_ohalsa-Rapporten0803.pdf

- **Swedish Government Presents New Policy for Global Development**

Public health was declared one of six major challenges for Sweden, when the new policy for global development (PGU) was introduced recently. The aim of the policy is to contribute to fair and sustainable development, enabling poor people to benefit from globalization.

Sweden puts emphasis on health promotion and preventive measures. Public health threats and communicable diseases primarily jeopardize the progress already made in the developing countries. Sexual and reproductive ill-health was singled out as a main part of global health problems and a hindrance in reaching the millennium goals.

Sweden will act within the UN, WHO and other international bodies to endorse efforts made to facilitate a future global alcohol strategy. Implementation of the WHO framework convention on tobacco control is another priority.

<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/3102/a/18434>

- ***Initiative on equity in France***

The French Institute of Prevention and Health Education (INPES) marked its National Prevention Days with a two-day conference held in Paris. One day was devoted to national issues, and during the other an international session took place to promote the exchange of best practices and strategies concerning national actions to reduce social inequalities in health. Speakers included EuroHealthNet member Bosse Pettersson from Sweden.

Overall, the expert discussion marked the importance of international exchange in order to understand the transferability of public health approaches and interventions, but it also shed light on the principle of community participation and partnerships that stimulate local ownership of problems and solutions as the most successful guarantee of sustainable progress in addressing the determinants of health inequalities.

www.inpes.fr

- ***Major event on HIV/AIDs planned in Germany***

The German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) together with the WHO/Regional Office for Europe are planning an international conference titled “*How Do We Know What Works - Strengthening Quality Assurance in HIV/AIDS Prevention in Europe?*”, which will be held from the 22nd to the 24th of October in Berlin.

www.bzga.de

- ***GREECE: Government to ban smoking in public by 2010***

The Health Ministry has announced that it will gradually ban smoking in public places, such as cafes and restaurants, by 2010. The stricter measures, aimed at protecting smokers and non-smokers, have the backing of most Greeks. 73% agreed that the reduction of smoking should be a target in national government policy. The authorities are also planning to launch a marketing campaign aimed at preventing young people from taking up smoking.

www.ensp.org

- **England: New national library for public health online**

The NE England Observatory for Public Health has recently launched a new national library with full online access to public health policies and actions.

<http://www.library.nhs.uk/publichealth/>

- **Maternal and child nutrition guidance**

The UK National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued new guidance for midwives, health visitors, pharmacists and other primary care services to improve the nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and children in low income households. It aims to address disparities in the nutrition of low-income and other disadvantaged groups compared with the general population.

It is relevant for all women who are pregnant (or planning to become pregnant), mothers of children aged under 5 and others who care for children aged under 5. The guidance complements and supports, but does not replace, NICE clinical guidelines on: antenatal care, diabetes in pregnancy and postnatal care.

Other NICE public health guidance issued this year includes physical activity and environment, smoking cessation and community engagement.

<http://www.nice.org.uk/ph>

- **DETERMINE builds strength**

The second meeting of the full DETERMINE Consortium took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia in association with the National Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Health. The 3 year EU co-funded project, led by the National Institute of Public Health for the Czech Republic and EuroHealthNet, aims to stimulate and support actions on social and economic health determinants at EU levels.

Partners were able to build ever closer liaison with the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health and to agree tasks to complete the first year of the project work, which is divided into work groups led by partners that are due to report during summer. Full details and links are contained in the portal:

www.health-inequalities.eu

4. Other Events and Publications

- ***Physical activity in Brussels***

The Alliance for Health & the Future held a meeting in Brussels attended by EuroHealthNet to discuss its new report “Physical Activity – becoming more active” based on 60 European case studies. Further information is available via www.healthandfuture.org

- ***Alcohol and Harm reduction events in Barcelona***

The 4th International Conference on **Alcohol and Harm Reduction** took place in Barcelona. This was a truly global conference, with over 1,200 delegates from 80 countries – including policy makers, UN staff, people who use drugs and frontline workers.

<http://www.g4q.nl/4th/index.html>

- ***NGOs join forces to tackle impact of alcohol marketing***

European public health NGOs have set up a new centre that monitors the marketing activities of the alcohol industry. EUCAM provides other NGOs and politicians information on the harmful effects of alcohol marketing and the activities of the alcohol and advertising industry. EUCAM is an official commitment of these NGOs in the European Alcohol and Health Forum. This information centre is unique since it is the only European based centre specialized in monitoring alcohol marketing.

This month, EUCAM has published three trend reports: "*Women-The new market*"; "*Drinks with a Boost: Alcoholic Energy Drinks*"; "*The Green and Healthy Image of Alcohol*".

Electronic copies of these trend reports can be found on

http://www.stap.nl/eucam/home/trends_in_alcohol_marketing.html.

EUCAM has launched a website <http://www.eucam.info/>

- ***Towards inclusion for people with mental health problems***

Mental Health Europe has developed the report “*From Exclusion to Inclusion – The Way Forward to Promoting Social Inclusion of People with Mental Health Problems*”. The report presents an overview of the situation of social inclusion of people with mental health problems across 27 Member States of the European Union.

The report aims to explain the specificity of mental health and mental illness, and to highlight the mechanisms that prevent people with mental health problems in many cases to be active citizens who can participate and contribute to the community and society in which they live. It sets out concrete suggestions that can help professionals and policy makers to strengthen the framework for national strategy development and policy coordination within and between the Member States in Europe on issues relating to this particularly vulnerable group.

www.mhe-sme.org

- **Working for a healthier tomorrow**

The subject of this Review is the health of people of working age, individuals whose health has consequences often far beyond themselves – touching their families and children, workplaces and wider communities. The economic costs of ill-health and its impact on work are measurable and set out for the first time in this Review, which is produced by the UK cross-government Health, Work and Well-being Programme

<http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/documents/working-for-a-healthier-tomorrow-tagged.pdf>

- **Gender inequity in health: how we can change it**

Special Supplement of *Global Public Health*
An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice, Volume 3 Supplement 1
 2008: Guest Editors: Gita Sen and Piroska Östlin

This supplement brings together the short versions of 8 reviews that were written in 2007 as part of the work of the Women and Gender Equity Knowledge Network (WGEKN) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH).

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=g792137052~db=all>

5. Calendar of international events

31.05.2008	World No Tobacco Day
09 – 10. 06.2008	Ljubljana: Health Council of Ministers
09 – 12.06.2008	Ostersund: 9 th Nordic public health conference “invest in health for a fairer and more sustainable future” www.nordiska2008.fhi.se

13.06.2008	EU High-Level Conference on Mental Health: hosted by EU Commissioner for Health in Brussels http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/mental_health_en.htm
25 - 27.06.2008	Tallinn: WHO European Ministerial Conference on health systems, health & wealth http://who.euro.who.int/healthsystems2008
01.07.2008	France Presidency of EU begins
07 - 09.08.2008	Aalborg: Mental Health Europe conference www.mhe.sme.org
10- 13.09.2008	Torino: IUHPE European Conference www.iuhpe.org
01.10.2008	International Day of Older People
10.10.2008	World Mental Health Day
17.10.2008	World Poverty Day
06- 07.11.2007	London: Conference on action to implement the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health Report (by invitation)
14.11.2008	World Diabetes Day
17 -20. 11.2008	Mali: Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health www.bamako2008.org
01.12.2008	International AIDS Day
01.01.2009	Czech Republic Presidency of EU begins
11- 12.03.2009	EuroHealthNet General Assembly and Policy Seminar, Edinburgh
01.07.2009	Sweden Presidency of EU begins

Please note that EuroHealthNet is not responsible for the content of sites or publications mentioned in this publication.

Would you like to inform other members about new publications or events in your organisation or country? Please send contributions to c.needle@eurohealthnet.eu

Also see Events Calendar on www.eurohealthnet.eu for upcoming events

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