

EU Health Highlights

News about health in the EU from EuroHealthNet Brussels Office
November 2007

1. Main Stories

- **New EC health strategy launched**

The European Commission has adopted a new Health Strategy, 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. Building on current work, this Strategy aims to provide, for the first time, an overarching strategic framework spanning core issues in health as well as health in all policies and global health issues. The Strategy aims to set clear objectives to guide future work on health at the European level, and to put in place an implementation mechanism to achieve those objectives, working in partnership with Member States.

The Strategy focuses on four principles and three strategic themes for improving health in the EU. The principles include taking a value-driven approach, recognising the links between health and economic prosperity, integrating health in all policies, and strengthening the EU's voice in global health. The strategic themes include Fostering Good Health in an Ageing Europe, Protecting Citizens from Health Threats, and Dynamic Health Systems and New Technologies.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/strategy/health_strategy_en.htm

- **EuroHealthNet plans hard look at new strategy**

The EuroHealthNet open policy seminar at its annual General Assembly in Brussels on 13 March 2008 will feature a debate and workshops on "Implementing the new European health strategy – what it really means for health improvement". Further details will be posted on www.eurohealthnet.eu

- **New health action programme confirmed**



The Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health 2008-2013 will come into force from 1 January 2008. This follows the first Programme of Community action in the field of public health (2003-2008) which financed over 300 projects and other actions.

The financial envelope for the programme is EUR 321 500 000.

Programme Objectives

To improve citizens' health security:

- Developing EU and Member States' capacity to respond to health threats, for example with health emergency planning and preparedness measures;
- Actions related to patient safety, injuries and accidents, risk assessment and community legislation on blood, tissues and cells.

To promote health, including the reduction of health inequalities:

- Action on health determinants – such as nutrition, alcohol, tobacco and drug consumption, as well as social and environmental determinants;
- Measures on the prevention of major diseases and reducing health inequalities across the EU;
- Increasing healthy life years and promoting healthy ageing.

Health information and knowledge:

- Action on health indicators and ways of disseminating information to citizens;
- Focus on Community added-value action to exchange knowledge in areas such as gender issues, children's health or rare diseases.

The Health Programme 2008-2013 is intended to complement, support and add value to the policies of the Member States and contribute to increased solidarity and prosperity in the European Union by protecting and promoting human health and safety and by improving public health.

Under the new Programme, participation and consultation with stakeholders will be promoted.

Financing mechanisms

To ensure full participation in the Programme by organisations which promote a health agenda in line with the Programme objectives, a wider variety of financing mechanisms are offered. These include:

- Co financing of projects intended to achieve a Programme objective;
- Tendering actions to achieve a Programme objective;
- Co financing of the operating costs of a non-governmental organisation or a specialised network;
- Joint financing of a public body or non-governmental organisation by the Community and one or more Member States;
- Joint actions with other Community programmes, which will generate coherence between this instrument and other Community programmes.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/pgm2008_2013_en.htm

- ***EC thinks ahead on health***

What are some of the main challenges that our DG may face in the future? How will the environment in which we operate evolve in the coming 10-20 years? For example: will consumers have confidence in what we purchase in a supermarket? Will consumers be increasingly looking for ethical or local products? Will citizens live longer and healthier? Will consumers spend even more time on the internet looking for information or making a purchase?

What are the different future scenarios? What does it mean for us? How should we prepare ourselves pro-actively? To discuss this, DG SANCO has just published its *'Future Challenges paper: 2009-2014'*.

This paper provides a 'draft vision' of the main challenges that we will be facing under the lifespan of the next Commission. It is built on the views of many SANCO officials and the input of a number of external experts, including from EuroHealthNet.

The process of drafting this paper has been largely participative but also rather innovative. The EC used scenarios during a series of workshops conceived to reflect on the core issues at stake: **governance, globalisation, changing society and confidence**.

The paper is now being widely circulated inside the Commission and externally. This will contribute to validate, improve and finally develop a common understanding of DG SANCO's vision, which will hopefully bring added value to the overall reflection on the future within the Commission.

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

- ***Initiatives on Health and Health Systems Impact Assessment (HSIA/HIA)***

This meeting, co-organised by the WHO Observatory on Health Systems and Policy, took place on 5-6 November as part of the EU Portuguese Council Presidency. The aim was to strengthen the development and implementation of HIA/HSIA by providing a forum for unifying the debate on impact assessments at European and at national level. EuroHealthNet's Ingrid Stegeman attended the meeting. A more elaborate report will be made available on the 'Closed Section' of the EuroHealthNet website.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is part of a broad 'family' of Impact Assessments (Economic, Environmental, Social, Equity, etc). HIA is considered to be in an 'adolescent' phase of development; while it has grown considerably in the past two decades, there is still a great deal of potential for further development.

HIA is being widely, although not systematically, applied throughout the EU, but this is mainly at local, project level, and rarely at the national and regional policy levels.

The focus should therefore now be on the institutionalization of HIA at higher levels of government.

Amongst some of the conclusions that could be drawn from the meeting is that there is no 'single way' to define or perform an HIA. Numerous methods qualify, as long as the basic criteria of informing a decision and predicting a consequence from a health perspective are met.

The application of HIA should be both pragmatic and opportunistic, with the aim of generating greater awareness and evidence to inform policy makers at the forefront. It was stressed, however, that HIA should fight for its 'rightful place' in the family of Impact Assessments, to ensure that its objectives are taken seriously and achieved.

The agenda of the meeting and all presentations will be available on:

<http://www.eu2007.min-saude.pt/PUE/en/conteudos/programa+da+saude/technical+initiatives/Conferência+HIA.htm>

2. News from the European Institutions

- ***Commission unveils vision for a more inclusive single market***

The European Commission has set out a package of initiatives to modernise the European single market and to bring more benefits to Europeans, building on past successes.

The Commission's measures are based on extensive consultation. They aim to ensure that the single market does even more to take advantage of globalisation, empower consumers, open up for small businesses, stimulate innovation and help maintain high social and environmental standards.

Among the most important policy actions are initiatives to: help consumers to exercise their contractual rights and get redress across borders; provide better information for consumers and small businesses; respond to weaknesses in sectors where the single market should deliver more; propose a Small Business Act; and introduce a "researcher passport"; clarify how EU rules apply to services and social services of general interest; and promote the quality of social services across the EU

However the Social Platform of EU NGOs has criticised the plan as failing to ensure market policies do not have a negative social impact and involve disadvantaged or vulnerable people better.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1728&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

www.socialplatform.org

- **Alcohol Forum underway**

The summary of the first meeting of the EC Alcohol and Health Forum is now available online. Commitments for action by participating umbrella organisations are scheduled to start in January 2008, with the next plenary session set for April.

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

- ***Europe-wide day promotes healthier eating for children.***



Over 4000 European chefs helped to take part in the first European healthy Eating Day in November. The day saw chefs giving demos in schools and fun events in restaurants as the EU teamed up with the European association of chefs to champion the cause. Lessons were organised in how to prepare simple, balanced meals that taste good. The idea of eating together with friends or family is also a key ingredient.

For example, in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, the city council and the commission put on an event in a city centre cinema where 40 chefs and 400 children explored healthy eating issues and watched a special screening of the film *Ratatouille*. 70 schools in Spain have signed up to have chefs visit, and Cypriot primary school children are having special lessons on diet and healthy living.

Obesity is on the rise across Europe, with 22 million children categorised as obese or overweight, around 20 000 obese children are diabetic and millions are heading towards heart disease. More than 1.4 million are estimated to have liver disorders.

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

- ***New health services impact assessment tool launched***

The web tool launched by DG SANCO is designed to help produce a Health Systems Impact Assessment as part of the European Commission's impact assessment procedures. Member States are fully responsible for health policy and the organisation of health systems, but nevertheless EU policies often have an impact on health and in particular many policies have unintended positive or negative consequences for Health Systems, due to their large and complex structures in every Member State.

This tool gives information about the objectives and health system functions that a proposal may impact on, either in a positive or negative way. The tool will also direct users to information and evidence from past initiatives that can help them find out first whether a proposal will have an impact on Health Systems, and then to estimate what that impact might be in a HSIA.

DG SANCO provides an advice service for users and links to experts on national health systems when appropriate.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/high_level/index_en.htm

- ***Scientists link weight gain with breast cancer risk***

Experts have discovered a connection between being overweight and the chances of developing breast cancer, leading to increased evidence that the food we eat and our lifestyle choices have a huge influence on what illnesses we are likely to develop. The latest findings of the EU-funded project EPIC (European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition) examined dietary effects in nine countries: Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.



Scientists believe exercise can help avoid breast cancer

The findings show that changes in lifestyle are the best ways to fight breast cancer, which is diagnosed in 44 000 women in Britain every year, 12 000 of whom die.

Middle-aged women who lose weight and do three to four hours of exercise a week are 40 percent less likely to develop breast cancer. Some scientists believe that weight gain prompts inflammation in fat cells and stimulates them to become cancerous.

Separate studies have also shown that women who exercise regularly can cut their risk of developing breast cancer by at least 10 percent, and those who cut down on alcohol reduce their risk by 10 to 30 percent, depending on their drinking habits.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article_07_11_06_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=5514

- ***Growing Regions, growing Europe: Public consultation on the future of EU Cohesion Policy***

A consultation by EC Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hubner is underway to collect contributions on the question of how the Union's cohesion policy should adapt to new challenges and how its delivery can be improved in order to maximise its impact in the future. The consultation is open until 31 January 2008.



Contributions should be based on a number of questions which were published in the European Commission's Report on economic and social cohesion, available together with contact details from:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/4thcohesionforum/consultation_en.cfm?nmenu=0

- ***MEPs seek more action on poverty and social exclusion...***

The European Parliament has adopted a report on the current process evaluating EU social policies, known as the “social reality stocktaking”. In a long report focussing on integrating labour markets, access to services and improving income support, comments were made about disabilities, access to health care, disease prevention and mental health.

The EC will produce a further communication and recommendations in 2008.

www.europarl.eu.int

- ***...and on sporting activity***

Children in schools should have at least three physical education sessions per week was the main recommendation of a report adopted by the European Parliament. The report suggests that such improvements will help to counteract obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles, but has no legislative impact.

www.europarl.eu.int

3. News from Member States / Organisations

- ***The SNIPH Prepares to Take on New Tasks***

Awaiting a new public health bill due in January from the Swedish government, the Swedish National Institute of Public Health (SNIPH) has received indications that it will be taking on the responsibilities of the National Drug Policy Coordinator and the National Alcohol Committee.

The National Drug Policy Coordinator is currently housed within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and is responsible for implementing and following up the National Action Plan on Narcotic Drugs, as well as for coordinating national drug policy in general.

Likewise, the National Alcohol Committee was appointed by the Swedish government to coordinate national efforts and to secure the implementation of the national action plan on alcohol harm reduction.

- ***New Report on the Consequences of Privatizing Retail Alcohol Sales***

What potential consequences would a privatisation of the alcohol monopoly have on Sweden's public health? This question is the focus of a new publication from the Swedish National Institute of Public Health. The report, written by an international team of experts, presents the potential effects of a privatization of the current system of selling alcohol.

According to the conservative estimates presented in the report, an elimination of the alcohol monopoly in Sweden would lead to a 14 per cent increase in alcohol consumption (1.4 litres per capita) if sales were restricted to licensed specialty stores. The increase in alcohol consumption would be 29 per cent (2.8 litres per capita) if sale of alcohol was allowed in, for example, grocery stores.

Since alcohol is a product that has well defined negative public health and safety consequences, any increase in alcohol consumption will have associated increases in alcohol-related harm. The authors' conclusion is that the consequences of a privatization of retail alcohol sales would be detrimental to Sweden's public health.

This report is available in English through the SNIPH website: http://www.fhi.se/upload/ar2007/Rapporter%202007/Monopolstudie_eng_ver19_0711.pdf

4. Other Events and Publications

- ***New heart action group set up with MEPs***

The European Heart Network (EHN) has established a HEART group in the European Parliament with the backing of EuroHealthNet. The aim is to follow up on the European Heart Health Charter that was signed in Brussels during the autumn, and engage the support of policymakers for action on heart health.

<http://www.ehnheart.org>

- ***National Report Cards pinpoint options for child safety***

The European Child Safety Alliance has launched a review of child safety in 18 countries, using a system of report cards to describe national performance and needs. The launch coincided with the International Day of the Child on 20 November. A European summary will support international policy improvements.

www.childsafetyeurope.org

- ***New WHO mental health website***

The newly launched WHO MIND website informs what WHO is doing regarding mental health and wellbeing worldwide.

http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/en/

- ***First World Social Marketing Conference***

EuroHealthNet's project partner The NSM Centre has launched the first ever World Social Marketing Conference's call for papers. The Conference which takes place on 29-30 September 2008 in Brighton will be the first ever world social marketing event where delegates, exhibitors and speakers from around the world can meet to discuss the application of social marketing. The conference is being organised under three broad themes:

- Academic
- Theory and Policy
- Practical application of social marketing

For more information on submitting abstracts and papers:
<http://www.nsmcentre.org.uk/public/default.aspx?pageID=37&MenuID=0>

- ***Action consortium on obesity determinants***

A consortium from 11 European countries is working for prevention of obesity through effective nutrition and physical activity actions using the EU FP6 Research framework. EURO-PREVOB has a new website setting out aims and activities via:

www.euoprevob.eu

- ***Regional health systems cooperate for sustainable development***

Healthclusternet has held its concluding conference in Brussels. The EU funded project has 13 partner regions seeking to help link health systems and economic effectiveness, and now seeks to identify further activities.

www.healthclusternet.org

- ***Shaping the world to illustrate inequalities in health***

Danny Dorling, Anna Barford
Social and Spatial Inequalities Group, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, England
Bulletin of the World Health Organization -Volume 85, Number 11, November 2007, 821-900

Available online at: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/85/11/07-044131/en/index.html>

- ***Our cities, our health, our future: Acting on social determinants for health equity in urban settings***

Report of the Knowledge Network on Urban Settings, WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health
Prepared by the WHO Centre for Health Development, Kobe, Japan - 2007

Available online as PDF file [70p.] at:
http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/knus_report_16jul07.pdf

- ***Effectiveness of interventions to promote physical activity in children and adolescents: systematic review of controlled trials***

<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj.39320.843947.BEv1>

- ***Inequalities in health in Scotland: what are they and what can we do about them***

Sally Macintyre, Occasional Paper Number 17- October 2007
MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit

Available online PDF [19p.] at:
<http://www.sphsu.mrc.ac.uk/files/File/reports/OP017.pdf>

- **Nuffield Council on Bioethics report**

Report on public health: ethical issues, including case studies on obesity, alcohol, smoking, water fluoridation, and infectious diseases.

<http://www.nuffieldbioethics.org>

5. Calendar of international events

01.12.2007	International AIDS Day
03 - 04.12.2007	Amsterdam: European Leadership Summit on Chronic Care www.worldcongress.com/chronic
03 - 05.12.2007	Paris: IUHPE committee meeting By invitation
04 - 05.12.2007	Brussels: EURO CITIES and GLA - Equality in the city www.eurocities.eu
04.12.2007	London: launch of Lancet series on chronic diseases https://www.eventsforce.net/rslive/frontEnd/homePage.csp?eventID=2
04.12.2007	Brussels: Homecare conference, in association with WHO
05 – 06. 12.2007	Brussels: Health Council of Ministers www.eu2007.min-saude.pt
13.12.2007	Brussels: Mental Health Economics European Symposium pssru@lse.ac.uk
17-18.12.2007	Oslo: Harm reduction and relapse prevention of addictive behaviours http://evidence.no/en/marlatt
31.12.2007	European year of equal opportunities ends
01.01.2008	European year of Intercultural Dialogue begins
01.01.2008	Slovenia Presidency of EU begins
04.02.2008	World Cancer Day
07 – 08 .02.2008	Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency conference on Cancers Tba
26.02.2008	Cardiff: Physical activity, putting theory into action on behaviour change www.wales.nhs.uk/wch
28.02.2008	Prague: DETERMINE Management meeting www.healthinequalities.eu

08.03.2008	International Women's Day
10 – 12. 03.2007	Berlin: 4 th World health Care Congress www.worldcongress.com/europe
12.03.2008	Brussels: EuroHealthNet General Assembly, Brussels By invitation
13.03.2008	Brussels: Implementing the EU health strategy – joint EuroHealthNet and IUHPE debate and policy seminar www.eurohealthnet.eu
14.03.2008	Brussels: IUHPE Regional committee meeting By invitation
24.03.2008	World TB Day
02 -03. 04.2008	Ljubljana: High level public health committee
03 – 05.04.2008	Barcelona: Building Capacity for Action, European Alcohol Policy Conference http://www.ias.org.uk/buildingcapacity/conference/index.html
13-16.04.2008	Amsterdam: International Congress on Physical Activity & Public Health www.ICPAPH08.org
17.04.2008	Brussels: Open Alcohol forum
05 – 08.05.2008	Ljubljana: Slovenia Presidency eHealth conference
07 – 08. 05.2008	Ljubljana: 2 nd DETERMINE consortium www.healthinequalities.eu
31.05.2008	World No Tobacco Day
09 – 10. 06.2008	Ljubljana: Health Council of Ministers
10 – 13.06.2008	Ostersund: 9 th Nordic public health conference “invest in health for a fairer and more sustainable future” www.nordiska2008.fhi.se
25 - 27.06.2008	Tallinn: WHO European Ministerial Conference 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
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
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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