

EU Health Highlights

News about health in the EU from EuroHealthNet Brussels Office

March 2008

1. Main Stories

- ***Nomination of Androula Vassiliou as Health Commissioner***

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has announced the resignation of Mr Markos Kyprianou as a member of the European Commission, and President Barroso's agreement with the nomination by the Republic of Cyprus of Mrs Androula Vassiliou as a member of the Commission. Mrs Vassiliou will take over the "Health" portfolio.

The appointment must next be confirmed by the other EU institutions, including interview by a parliamentary committee to determine her competence for office.

Mrs Vassiliou started her career as a lawyer. She was an elected Member of the House of Representatives of Cyprus for two terms (1996-2001 and 2001-2006). She served among others on the European Affairs Committee and on the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Cyprus and the EU. Since 2002, she serves as chairperson of the board of trustees of the Cyprus Oncology Centre.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/363&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

- ***Public consultation on future of EU scheme "Food Distribution to the Most Deprived Persons"***

The European Commission is inviting charitable bodies, government services and all interested NGOs, as well as the general public to share their opinion and to contribute to a web-powered consultation on the EU scheme to distribute free food to people in need in the Community.

The public is invited to give a feed-back on a number of key questions in relation with the EU programme to distribute free food to the most deprived persons in the Community through a call for contributions to a large internet-consultation. The consultation runs until 14 May.

With the evolution of the CAP, the basis for the free food distributed to charities changed. For this reason this EU scheme will undergo a review in 2008. The aim of the consultation is to collect comments and suggestions that will help to assess possible options for the programme's future.

Since 1986, the European Commission made available some € 2.5 billion under the Food aid scheme for the most deprived people in the Community. In 2007, the aid

reached more than 13 million beneficiaries in 18 Member States. The scheme has been based originally on European intervention stocks. With the reform of CAP, these stocks have decreased drastically and, in some cases, even disappeared. Therefore, the revision of the existing scheme is necessary. More information on the scheme as well as the consultation questionnaire are available on the internet at:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/markets/freefood/index_en.htm

- **WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health**



Commission on social
determinants of health

The Knowledge Networks of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health have completed their final reports. Reports submitted to the Commission and documents commissioned by the Knowledge Networks to provide evidence and inform their final reports are also posted on their website. The Commission intends to publish its final report in autumn 2008.

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/

- ***Patient safety consultation April – May***

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on patient safety. The results of this will help in the development of the Commission's proposal on general patient safety issues planned for the end of 2008. That proposal will address the important issue of patient safety throughout the European Union (EU) and will include a detailed first pillar, addressing healthcare-associated infections (HCAI), on which separate public consultations have already been held.

The two primary objectives of the Commission's general patient safety proposal will be:

- to support Member States in their efforts to minimise harm to patients from adverse events in their health systems, through appropriate policies and actions to improve safety and, therefore, quality of care.
- to improve EU citizens' confidence that they will receive sufficient and comprehensible information available on levels of safety and available redress in EU health systems, including healthcare providers in their own country and in other Member States.

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=patientsafety>

2. News from the European Institutions

- ***Open Alcohol Forum to be held in Brussels***

Within the framework of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, the Commission services will organise an 'Open Forum' on Thursday, 17 April 2008 in Brussels. The overall objective of the Forum is to provide a common platform for all interested stakeholders at EU level that pledge to step up actions relevant to reducing alcohol-related harm. Since the Forum was established in June 2007, its more than 50 members have made more than 70 formal commitments to implement 'meaningful and verifiable actions' to reduce alcohol-related harm.

The Open Forum will be a platform for general exchange of information and for discussion with a broader range of interested parties. A detailed programme will be posted on the Commission's Public Health website⁴ closer to the event.

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

- ***Health inequalities highlighted for heads of states***

Social protection reforms and active inclusion policies have visibly contributed to higher growth and more jobs in Europe over the past year. But more needs to be done to ensure that these benefits reach those at the margins of society and improve social cohesion, says a Commission report discussed by Employment and Social Affairs Ministers. The 2008 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Inclusion' focuses on priorities and progress made in the areas of child poverty, working longer, private pension provision, health inequalities and long-term care. The report was sent for discussion by heads of governments at the Spring European Council to highlight the social dimension of the jobs and growth package.

16% of EU citizens remain at risk of poverty while some 8% are at risk of poverty despite being employed. Out of the 78 million Europeans living at risk of poverty, 19 million are children. Social policies have a major impact on health and health is an important determinant of life chances. There are currently wide disparities in health outcomes across the EU, with men's life expectancies ranging from 65.3 years (Lithuania) to 78.8 (Cyprus and Sweden) and those for women from 76.2 (Romania) to 84.4 (France). Health concerns should be adopted in all policies, including promoting healthy life styles, while social protection should ensure access for all to quality healthcare and long-term care and promote prevention, including for those most difficult to reach.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/news_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/jrep_en.htm

Study on child poverty:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/publications_en.htm#childpoverty

- ***European good practices to help cut workplace illness***

Nine organisations have received European Good Practice Awards for helping to prevent musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) – the most common form of work-related illness in Europe. Across the EU, 25% of workers complain of backache and 23% report muscular pains. The winners were announced at the closing event of the 'Lighten the Load' campaign, organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA). The Agency also presented a new report setting out the latest scientific evidence on the issue.

The 'Lighten the Load' campaign aimed to promote an integrated approach to tackling MSDs while also helping workers affected by them continue in work. It complements the EU's new strategy for health and safety at work (2007–2012) which targets occupational ill health and aims to cut by a quarter work-related accidents across the EU.

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm>

- ***New financial mechanisms and funding opportunities in 2008.***

To ensure appropriate participation in the Second Programme of Community action in the field of Health (2008-13) and fulfilment of all the programme objectives, a wider variety of financing mechanisms are offered.

Both the Programme and its Work Plan for 2008 foresee financial contributions for specific actions ('grants for an action') and to support the functioning of particular bodies or specialized networks ('operating grants'). The actions may include typical projects but also the organisation of conferences.

The financial contributions may, where appropriate, include joint financing by the Community and one or more Member states or by the Community and the competent authorities of other participating countries.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

- ***Mental health conference in preparation***

More information is becoming available about plans for future EC mental health activities following some preparatory meetings. The objective of the conference on 13 June in Brussels is to launch a so-called *European Pact for Mental Health*. The pact is hoped to be an inter-sectoral declaration expressing the willingness of members to work together in addressing mental health issues, based on a set of agreed principles for action. Participants are expected to include representatives from Member State governments and the health, employment, social and civil society sectors.

The conference and pact will focus on four priority themes:

- 1) prevention of suicide
- 2) mental health in youth and education
- 3) mental health at the workplace

4) mental health in older people.

Background papers will outline policy objectives; another situation analysis; a framework for action; suggestions for improving the knowledge base and approaches for implementation in each priority theme.

EuroHealthNet Special Interest Group officer Karin Lotz attended the preparatory meeting on mental health in older people. Although the event is already imminent, further details are hoped to be published shortly. It is unclear if the pending appointment of a new Commissioner will affect this event.

- ***New directive on road safety***

The Commission has adopted a proposal for a Directive aimed at facilitating the cross-border prosecution of traffic offences which imperil road safety. Technical measures and legal instruments are to be put in place which will enable EU drivers to be identified and thus prosecuted for offences committed in a Member State other than the one where his or her vehicle is registered. It is hoped that this will make an appreciable difference to road safety in Europe by bringing about a positive change of behaviour in both non-resident and resident drivers.

The proposed Directive will cover four types of road traffic offence: speeding, drink-driving, not wearing a seat belt and failing to stop at a red light. These four offences are the leading causes of accidents and road deaths: they are involved in almost 75% of all road deaths.

Since 2001, the EU's goal in the field of road safety has been to halve the number of victims of fatal accidents in ten years. In that year (2001) 54 000 people were killed on the roads of the 27 countries which currently belong to the Union. In 2007, for the first time since 2001, there was no annual progress in cutting the number of deaths on the roads: it was still 43 000.

In October 2003 the Commission adopted a Recommendation dealing with best practice on enforcement in the field of road safety (2004/345/EC). The trend in accidents shows that this non-coercive instrument is not enough to achieve results.

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/index_en.htm

3. News from Member States / Organisations

- ***Healthy Ageing project report on Europa***

What regular Health Highlights readers already knew is now official on the huge EU website – the Healthy Ageing project which concluded in 2007 has just been posted for the world to see and use.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_projects/2003/action1/action1_2003_26_en.htm#3

- ***IUHPE Conference site online***

The **8th IUHPE European Conference on Health Promotion and Education** will be held in Torino (Italy), from 09 to 13 September 2008. The conference will address issues around European integration and professional collaboration along two streams: first, establishing dialogue among different ethno-political cultures in different areas of the European health promotion, and secondly, appropriate transfer and application of the knowledge and experience of different professional groups.

The website of the Conference **www.hp08torino.org** is online and it contains all the information about the Scientific Programme, Registrations, Call for Abstracts, Contacts and useful information. Abstracts must be submitted by 15 April



- ***New website for the alliance of the Nutrition and physical activity networks in Wales...***

This website contains information about the Nutrition Network for Wales and the Physical Activity Network for Wales, latest news and events, research and evaluation, policies and strategies, target groups, campaigns, community initiatives and much more.

<http://www.physicalactivityandnutritionwales.org.uk/>

- ***... and on sexual health too***

The All Wales Sexual Health Network has launched its new fully bilingual website on Monday 3 March. The website will host the 'Sharing Practices' databases (formerly the 'Promising Practices' database with revised criteria), and provide members with an opportunity to share ideas and experience of project work with other sexual health professionals in Wales. It will also detail courses and programmes delivering sexual health training and give a platform to campaigns such as Contraceptive Awareness Week, Sexual Health Week, and World AIDS day.

Visit www.shnwales.org.uk or www.shncymru.org.uk

- ***EuroHealthNet meetings focus on implementation***

EuroHealthNet held a policy seminar in Brussels looking at how the proposed new EU Health Strategy can be used and implemented. Although senior EC officials could not participate due to briefings required by the new Commissioner designate, over 100 experts debated priorities and expectations. A statement is being drafted for wide dissemination based on debates and workshops on healthy ageing and anti obesity priorities.

4. Other Events and Publications

- ***Global Health event***

The Royal College of Physicians is organising a conference on ‘*Global Health: Current Issues, Future Trends and Foreign Policy*’ on the 29 April 2008. Drawing together experts from the clinical and policy worlds, this conference will explore the growing debate on global health, with updates on communicable and chronic disease. The conference will be of interest to physicians, public health specialists, healthcare personnel, policy makers, political lobbyists, journalists, supranational organisations and NGOs. Further details and the conference programme: <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/event/details.aspx?e=1012>

- ***The Cochrane Health Equity Field***

The aim of a new initiative is to encourage authors of Campbell and Cochrane reviews to include explicit descriptions of the effect of the interventions not only on the whole population but to describe their effect upon the disadvantaged and/or their ability to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in health and to promote their use to the wider community. Ultimately, this will help build the evidence base on such interventions and increase capacity to act on the health gap between rich and poor.

Website: <http://www.equity.cochrane.org/en/index.html>

- ***Inequalities in health by social class dimensions in European countries of different political traditions***

This article compares inequalities in self-perceived health in the population older than 50 years, in 2004, using Wright's social class dimensions, in nine European countries grouped in three political traditions (Social democracy, Christian democracy and “late” democracies). It finds that absolute and relative health inequalities by social class dimensions are found in the three political traditions, but these differences are more marked in “late” democracies and mainly among women.

This study is one of the first to show the impact of different political traditions on social class inequalities in health. The authors suggest their results emphasize the need to evaluate the impact of the implementation of public policies.

<http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/dyn051v1>

- ***New guidance for practitioners on child wellbeing***

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence in England (NICE) has issued new guidelines on promoting young children’s social and emotional wellbeing. It recommends more comprehensive approaches and earlier identification of problems.

www.nice.org.uk

- ***SENCA: new southern European network on HIV/HCV co-infection***

The European Aids Treatment Group (EATG) is supporting the creation of a new network of activists from Italy, Spain, France and Portugal (SENCA) because in parts of Southern Europe, liver failure is now the leading cause of death among HIV-positive people.

Senca was one the major outcomes of the seminar held last October 2007 in Bilbao with local HIV NGO's. Since then, the network has been actively involved in setting research agendas, as well as increasing access to both HCV treatment and liver transplantation programs for HIV/HCV co-infected people.

Senca has set itself ambitious priorities of action for 2008, including a study on the reasons why co-infected people in need of transplant are not referred to the appropriate units or are not referred in due time. The study will track geographic gaps in order to learn where the obstacles are and make significant changes. If you wish to find out more about Senca, please contact www.eatg.org

- **Primer on Environment and Health in Europe published**

The Health and Environment Alliance has published a report on *Environment and Health in Europe* which provides an introduction to European environmental health policy. Written in the context of the new European Commission Action Plan on Environment and Health 2004-2010, this booklet is aimed at policy-makers in the health and environmental sectors, including politicians, NGOs, academics, local authorities, women's and youth groups, and those working in the health sector, including health ministries, hospitals and health care centres, and health professionals and carers, patient and European citizen's groups.

<http://www.env-health.org/>

- ***“European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics 2008”***

The European Heart Network has issued the third edition of its report on CVD statistics in Europe. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the main cause of death in the EU with over 2 million people dying from CVD every year. Moreover, the statistics published in this report indicate that there are significant inequalities between Member States and that together, CVD across all Member States is estimated to cost the EU economy €192 billion a year, which raises concern when compared to the 2008 EU budget of €129.1 billion. Of the total cost of CVD in the EU, 57% is due to direct health care cost, 21% to productivity losses and 22% to the informal care of people with CVD.

<http://www.ehnheart.org/content/sectionintro.asp?level0=1457>

- **Spotlight on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)**

The Smoke Free Partnership group of NGOs is preparing a series of briefing papers about the WHO FCTC to inform policy makers of their obligations and help transform the Convention into practice. The first briefing paper “*Spotlight on the FCTC*” was launched in January at the European Parliament in Brussels and is available in 17 languages.

<http://www.smokefreepartnership.eu/>

5. Calendar of international events

02 -03. 04.2008	Ljubljana: High level public health committee
03 – 05.04.2008	Barcelona: <i>Building Capacity for Action</i> , European Alcohol Policy Conference http://www.ias.org.uk/buildingcapacity/conference/index.html
10 – 11.04.2008	Paris: INPES 4 th Prevention Days
13-16.04.2008	Amsterdam: International Congress on Physical Activity & Public Health www.ICPAPH08.org
17.04.2008	Brussels: Open Alcohol forum
23.04.2008	Brussels: EU Platform on Diet, Health & Physical Activity
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
12. 06.2008	London: Provisional launch of Commission on Social Determinants of Health report and recommendations.
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 (tbc)
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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