

North West Summary EU Health Issues

1 JAN - 15 JAN 2008

LATEST NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

If you have any comments or queries concerning this summary please contact the North West Health Brussels Office at :

health@nwhbo.org



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DID YOU KNOW?

See page 2 for our fortnightly fact!

Cancer

TITLE: SLOVENIAN EU PRESIDENCY MAKES CANCER A PRIORITY

BRIEF: Slovenia took over the EU presidency on 1 January 2008 and has put tackling cancer at the top of its health agenda.

ISSUE: 1 January 2008 Slovenia took over the EU presidency. It will hold this position for six months, during which time it has committed itself to helping to tackle cancer. 7-8 February, Slovenia will host a large cancer conference in Brdo. The conclusions from this conference will be drawn together at the formal Health Council in Brussels on 28 February. More specifically, during its EU presidency Slovenia will focus on the issues of resistance to antibiotics and pharmaceutical pricing and refunding in the EU. Pharmaceutical issues are expected to be discussed in more detail by EU Health ministers during their informal Health Council on 7-8 April. The purpose of these discussions is to strengthen the ties between the various national authorities that regulate pharmaceutical pricing and refunding, and to share their best practices.

ACTIONS: The NWHBO are awaiting the outcomes of the meeting mentioned above and will report accordingly. The Slovenian presidency website is: <http://www.eu2008.si/en/index.html>

Medicines

TITLE : EUROPEAN COMMISSION LAUNCHES PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PHARMACOVIGILANCE

BRIEF : The European commission has launched a consultation on pharmacovigilance. Pharmacovigilance is the science relating to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse effects, particularly long term and short term side effect of medicines. The consultation is open until 1 February 2008.

ISSUE: Pharmacovigilance comes under the remit of the Community Code relating to medicinal products for human use (Directive 2001/83/EC). In 2004, legislation with regards to pharmacovigilance was revised. However, general opinion is that these rules remain too complicated and contain certain amount of redundancy. The EU has two main objectives on this issue. Firstly, to streamline registration procedures for authorised products at national level and impose safety measures on the member states. And secondly, establish a committee in charge of pharmacovigilance, which would issue recommendations on product safety to the Committee for Human Medicinal Products. The results to this consultation will feed into a draft Directive amending the Community Code relating to medicinal products for human use, which the European Commission is expected to present to the European Council and the European Parliament at the end of 2008.

ACTIONS: Responses to the consultation should be submitted to Peter Arlett, email: pete.arlett@ec.europa.eu by 1 February 2008.

The NWHBO is now online! Please visit:

www.northwesthealth.eu

Events Calendar 2008

| Date | Place | Event |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| 11 January 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | EUREGHA Health Inequalities Conference |
| 25 January 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | EHMA Health Services Conference |
| 31 January 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | Cohesion Consultation Closes |
| 14 February 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | Rare Diseases Consultation Closes |
| 25-28 February 2008 | Galway, Ireland | 2nd International Conference on Health and Biodiversity |
| 26–27 February 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | 4th Annual Brussels Climate Change Conference |
| 4-7 March 2008 | Barcelona, Spain | The International Workshop on Security and Privacy in E-Health |
| 15-19 April 2008 | Berlin, Germany | 6th European Breast Cancer Conference |
| 20-21 May 2008 | Manchester, UK | Protecting the Health of Communities in the 21st Century Conference |
| 28-29 May 2008 | Brussels, Belgium | EURO-URHIS Urban Health Indicators—Final Conference |
| 18-20 June 2008 | Manchester, UK | ‘Delivering the Future’ NHS Confederation annual conference and exhibition |
| 5-8 July 2008 | Lyon, France | 20th Meeting of the European Association for Cancer Research |
| 4-6 November 2008 | Birmingham, UK | NHS Employers Annual Conference and Exhibition |

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the WHO, 14% of all deaths in the European region are caused by a poor or unhealthy diet



Tobacco

TITLE: EU AND JAPAN TOBACCO ATTEMPT TO COMBAT CIGARETTE SMUGGLING AND COUNTERFEITING MINUS THE UK

BRIEF: The EU and the international cigarette producer Japan Tobacco have signed an agreement to combat cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting. The UK is the only member state not taking part in the agreement.

ISSUE: Tobacco is a leading cause for concern with regards to EU citizen's health. The EU and Japan Tobacco, the umbrella organisation for cigarette brands such as Camel and Silk Cut, have recently signed an agreement to reduce cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting. The agreement being that Japan Tobacco will pay 26 EU member states \$400 million over 15 years in return for any civil lawsuits against Japan Tobacco for claims arising out of past conduct related to the manufacture, sale, distribution or storage of cigarettes being dropped. In addition, Japan Tobacco is required to mark certain packaging with machine-scanable barcodes and implement further procedures to enable the tracking of its products. Although this agreement is seen as an attempt by the EU to recover some of the \$6 billion tax and customs revenue lost each year, any reduction in cigarette availability has a potential positive effect on health.

ACTIONS: The NWHBO will continue to monitor and report on any tobacco related EU initiatives. For more information please email: health@nwhbo.org

Patient Information

TITLE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO HARMONISE RULES GOVERNING INFORMATION TO PATIENTS ON MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

BRIEF: The European Commission aims to harmonise the rules governing information to patients about medicinal products in all EU member states.

ISSUE: 20 December 2007, the European Commission produced a report which stated that EU citizens have unequal access to information about medicinal products, depending on the member state in which they reside. The European Commission aims to rectify this situation and harmonise the rules governing information to patients throughout Europe, respecting the EU-wide ban on advertising for prescription drugs. The greatest level of transparency was found to be in the Netherlands and Germany where free access to basic information on all authorised medicines is provided. In comparison some member states have very strict rules. The role of public authorities and private organisations in providing this information is also markedly different through out the EU. The European Commission is concerned about the absence of EU standards on the quality of information, especially that found on the internet as this medium is being used increasingly by patients to obtain information about medicinal products. This is leading to fears that wrong, misleading or confusing information may create health risks. The role of the pharmaceutical industry in the provision of this information is highly controversial and currently being debated at EU level. The European Commission hopes to make a distinction between advertising, which must continue to be banned for prescription drugs, and non-promotional information, as well as to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

ACTIONS: The European Commission has stated that it will propose the establishment of a framework giving EU citizens understandable, objective, high-quality and non promotional information about the benefits and the risks of their medicines in the near future.

Environment

TITLE: EU HEALTH MINISTERS PUSH FOR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT CONCERNS TO BE INTEGRATED INTO ALL POLICIES

BRIEF: 20 December 2007, EU Health Ministers adopted conclusions which recommend that health and environment concerns are integrated into all EU policies.

ISSUE: The topic of health and the environment is an increasingly dominant theme at EU level. The latest EU health ministers' conclusions recommend that environment and health concerns must be integrated into all EU strategic policies, plans and programmes. The conclusions also emphasised; the need for awareness initiatives and early action; the benefits of preventative and precautionary measures; the need for adequate resources; the pursuit of research programmes and an increase in their funding to enable more effective prevention and responses to hazards. The EU health ministers also advocated the pursuit of the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010 and called for the strengthening of partnerships between the various sectors involved. The European Commission have also been invited by the EU Health ministers to pursue the introduction of an environment and health information system to identify hazards, set planning priorities and measure progress and changes in environmental quality and health.

ACTIONS: For more information on the issue of health and the environment please visit the Health and Environment website at <http://www.env-health.org/>.

TITLE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO CONSIDER NEW SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

BRIEF: The European Commission is working to further integrate non-economic indicators into EU policy-making by 2010, including environmental and social indicators.

ISSUE: The European Commission is working on a new tool to measure the wealth and wellbeing of countries beyond the traditional measurement of GDP. The new tool will aim to measure 'true' progress, taking environmental and social indicators into consideration. The European Commission has been working for some time on developing a new set of Environmental indicators including air and water quality, but may find social indicators more complicated to develop. This topic was highlighted at a recent conference which considered the limits of GDP as an indicator in measuring world economic performance.

ACTIONS: The NWHBO is very interested in the progress being made on this issue and will report any new developments through the EU Health Issues Summary. To view the article, please see: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/gdp-outdated-indicator-wellbeing/article-168521>

eHealth

TITLE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF E-HEALTH

BRIEF: The European Commission has identified eHealth as a market with enormous potential for development and is taking measures aimed at boosting consumer demand in the sector.

ISSUE: A total of six action plans have been published this week by the European Commission which will help boost consumer demand in the markets of ehealth, sustainable construction, protective textiles, bio-based products, recycling and renewable energy. These action plans will be what the market is calling the 'Lead Market Initiative', and aims to support these six markets in Europe which have great development potential. Measures have been identified that will take place between now and 2010 that aim to boost consumer demand in these sectors, this will at some point include legislative proposals. A major part of the action plans in all six markets is the link with public procurement in supporting innovative products.

ACTIONS: The action plans can be found at: http://www.euractiv.com/29/images/LeadMarketInitiative_COM-2007-860_SEC-2007-1729_Annex%20I_en_tcm29-169407.pdf

Pharmaceuticals

TITLE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION BEGINS SECTOR INQUIRY INTO PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

BRIEF: The European Commission has begun an investigation into the pharmaceutical industry to establish whether anti-competitive practices have slowed down innovation and blocked the entry of cheaper products onto the European market.

ISSUE: According to the European Commission fewer new pharmaceuticals are being brought out on the European market and the entry of generic pharmaceuticals are sometimes seems to be delayed. Consequently an inquiry has been launched into whether or not the pharmaceutical industry is involved in anti-competitive practices and the blocking of cheaper generic products on to the European market. The inquiry began with a series of unexpected raids of both innovative and generic pharmaceutical companies across Europe. This is the first time a Commission sector inquiry has begun with unannounced inspections rather than with requests for information.

ACTIONS: Autumn 2008, the European Commission will publish an interim report on the inquiry. Spring 2009, the European Commission will publish the final results of the inquiry. Based on the inquiry's findings, the Commission or national competition authorities will take action on the most serious competition concerns.

CAP

TITLE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION SET TO RECOVER € 256.3 MILLION OF CAP EXPENDITURE FROM MEMBER STATES

BRIEF: 20 December 2007, the European Commission adopted the decision to recover € 256.3 million of EU farm money unduly spent by member states.

ISSUE: A large proportion of the EU budget is put into the CAP. A recent decision adopted by the European Commission states that a total of € 256.3 million of EU farm money unduly spent by Member States will be claimed back. This money is being recovered due to inadequate control procedures or non-compliance with EU rules on agricultural expenditure and will go back into the EU Community budget. Member States are responsible for paying out and checking expenditure under the CAP, and the Commission is required to ensure that Member States have made correct use of the funds. The UK will be charged 9.7 million for late payments.

ACTIONS: The Commissioner for DG Agriculture Mariann Fischer Boel is expected to announce legislative proposals relating to the CAP 'Health Check' in May 2008.