European Union of Medical Specialists - Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes

The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

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EP Committee opposes EU Council on Working Time

On 5th November, the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs met in Brussels to examine in second reading the proposed new directive on working time. A majority of Members of that Committee opposed key decisions made the EU Council in June 2008 (See UEMS News 2008/05). This text will now be put for adoption at the EP plenary to be held on 2nd December 2008.

As they examined the report by Mr Alejandro Cercas (PES, ES) and the different amendments tabled, Members of the EP Committee rejected the main items of the compromise found by the EU Council when meeting on 9th June this year.

The opt-out

While the Member States had agreed to keep the

amount of weekly working time down to 48hours with a possibility to opt out, MEPs ruled that **the opt-out clause should lapse three years after the reformed directive enters into force.**

Time spent on-call

The other major stumbling block with Council was the issue of **on-call time which is now defined as "any period during which the worker has the obligation to be available at the workplace in order to intervene, at the employer's request, to carry out his activity or duties".**

For the Council, the inactive period of on-call time should not be considered as working time unless national legislation, a collective agreement or an agreement between the social partners provides otherwise.

In their vote, MEPs in the committee recognised that there is a difference between active and inactive on-call time, and that the latter can be calculated in different way, but they nevertheless insisted that **the full period of on-call time, including the inactive period, should be counted as working time.**

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Editorial

In our June issue of the Newsletter, we extensively developed the agreement found by Member States on the issue of working time.

Further to that decision, Members of the European Parliament had to examine this text in second reading and come up with their decision. A first analysis within the EP committee on Employment and Social Affairs led to an outcome slightly diverging from the Council's decision and now needs to be confirmed by the plenary.

In this issue

SACCME Director Dr Helios Pardell passed away

It is with deep regret that the UEMS has to announce that Dr Helios Pardell, Director of the Spanish Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, died on 30th October.

Dr Pardell was a Consultant in Internal Medicine and Arterial Hypertension and a renowned expert in continuing medical education and professional development both nationally and internationally. His contributions to the various networks, particularly the UEMS-EACCME, were wholly acknowledged and will remain as an essential contribution to improving European accreditation.

The UEMS Executive and the UEMS Secretariat would like to contribute their sincere condolences to Dr Pardell's widow and relatives. The UEMS will remember him as a distinguished doctor who dedicated himself to the European cause where he achieved considerable results. The UEMS will remain ever-grateful to him.

European Commission public consultations

Risk assessment methodologies and approaches for mutagenic and carcinogenic substances

The European Commission and the Scientific Committees on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER), Consumer Products (SCCP) and Emerging and Newly Identified Risks (SCENIHR) recently launched a public consultation on the risk assessment methodologies and approaches for mutagenic and carcinogenic substances. This consultation will run until 2 December 2008.

While the opinion is still at a draft stage, the Scientific Committees (SCs) indicate in their preliminary conclusions that the risk assessment of substances that are both genotoxic and carcinogenic should be done on a case-by-case approach. The preliminary report is published on the web and stakeholders are invited to comment through an online consultation aimed at gathering feedback on the scientific evidence and conclusions drawn by the SCs.

For more information, and the online consultation, see http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scher/scher_cons_03_en.htm.

Scientific opinion on the antibiotic resistance effects of biocides

The European Commission and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) recently launched a consultation process on a scientific opinion on the antibiotic resistance effects of biocides. This consultation will run until 25 November 2008.

Biocides are invaluable compounds that provide society with numerous benefits. The worldwide increase of antibiotic resistance in bacterial pathogens and the accompanying treatment failures in human and animal infectious diseases are generating concerns. Therefore, in order to preserve the role of biocides in infection control and hygiene it is paramount to prevent the emergence of bacterial resistance and cross-resistance through their appropriate and prudent use.

As a result, the Commission asked the SCENIHR whether current scientific evidence indicated that the use of certain active substances in biocidal products could contribute to the occurrence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

A recent report by the SCENIHR concluded that this was actually the case both in humans and in the environment.

The preliminary report is published on the web and stakeholders are invited to comment through an online consultation aimed at gathering feedback on the scientific evidence and conclusions drawn by the SCENIHR.

For more information on the SCENIHR opinion, and the online consultation, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/scenihr_cons_09_en.htm.

The European Commission calls on interested parties to submit scientific information on mutagenic and carcinogenic substances as well as on antibiotic resistance

European Antibiotic Awareness Day

The first-ever European Antibiotic Awareness Day took place across Europe on 18th November 2008. The European Antibiotic Awareness Day will become an annually recurring event that is intended to raise awareness about the risks associated with inappropriate use of antibiotics and how to take antibiotics responsibly.

This year European Antibiotic Awareness Day focused specifically on the need for everybody to stop any unnecessary use of antibiotics.

European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a European health initiative in close collaboration with the World Health Organization, as well as many other relevant representative stakeholder groups such as health professionals and scientists.

All public authorities, healthcare professionals, child care professionals and social workers as well as private organisations, families and individuals are encouraged to take part in the initiative and to launch their own activities or discussions on responsible use of antibiotics on European Antibiotic Awareness Day.

European Commission campaign for patients

Europe for patients - Better healthcare for all in Europe

On 30th September 2008, Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou launched the 'Europe for Patients' campaign in Brussels. This campaign will highlight the different health policy initiatives the Commission intends to adopt in the coming months. All these initiatives are bound by a common goal: better healthcare for all in Europe, and will address issues such as cross-border care, patient safety, rare diseases, organ donation and transplantation, cancer screening, health workforce, flu and childhood vaccination and antibiotic use.

The launch unveiled a webpage on the EU Health Portal in 22 languages which will become an information centre where documents, articles and events will be posted in relation to the Europe for Patients initiatives. This will provide a simple entry point to the often complex world of EU healthcare policies and actions. It will better explain what is being done at the European level and how it can benefit citizens in the field of health. The website also provides an opportunity to post national and regional news and events.

Speech by Ms Androulla Vassiliou
Launch of the "Europe for Patients" Campaign
(Brussels, 30th September 2008)

European focus on rare diseases

The European Commission recently adopted a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on rare diseases. These texts set out an overall Community strategy to support Member States in diagnosing, treating and caring for the 36 million EU citizens with rare diseases. The Commission considered that the limited number of patients affected and the fragmentation of knowledge about them across the European Union, makes rare diseases a prime example of where working at European level is necessary and beneficial.

This Communication sets out a Community strategy for action in three main areas:

- improving recognition and visibility of rare diseases;
- supporting national plans for rare diseases in the Member States;
- strengthening cooperation and coordination for rare diseases at European level.

According to the Commission, such European cooperation will help to bring together the scarce resources for rare diseases that currently are fragmented across individual countries in the EU. European action will help patients and professionals to collaborate across Member States in order to share and coordinate expertise and information. This will be achieved through, for example, networks linking centres of expertise in different countries, and by making use of new information and communication technologies ("E-Health"). The Commission also intends to build on successful existing actions, such as the previous health programme on rare diseases, the Research and Technological Development Framework Programmes, and the specific regulatory framework already in place to provide additional incentives for the development of 'orphan' drugs for these conditions.

This is an area where the added value of working together at European level is clear and concrete, and can make the difference between marginalisation and proper treatment for millions of people across Europe

Working Time

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Compensatory rest periods

Where workers have not been able to take their normal rest periods, they should be granted compensatory rest periods. Contrarily to the Council's common position, the EP committee decided that **such compensatory rest periods should be granted at the end of the working period**, in accordance with applicable legislation or an agreement between the social partners.

MEPs also adopted amendments which aimed at clarifying the situation of workers covered by more than one employment contract: working time in this case should be calculated as the sum of the period of work undertaken under each contract.

Next steps

The EP committee's decision will now have to be examined by the EP plenary on 2nd December. Discussions are currently being held with the EU Council in order to find compromises between the two differing positions.

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NEW DATES FOR THE NEXT MEETINGS

UEMS SECTIONS & BOARDS (Brussels)
21st Feb. 2009

UEMS COUNCIL (Brussels)
24th-25th April 2009

EVENTS

EPPOSI Workshop on Chronic Conditions
-A European Strategy for Chronic Conditions
3rd December 2008 - Brussels, Belgium
This EPPOSI multi-stakeholder workshop will aim therefore to provide an opportunity for thought provoking debate and begin to provide a number of novel solutions.
More information on: http://www.epposi.org

Closing Conference of the European Collaboration on Dementia (EUCODE) Project
9th December 2008 - Brussels, Belgium
The aim of the project is to develop a European network of all the players active in the area of dementia to jointly develop consensual indicators and to develop an ongoing dialogue between these actors to identify ways of developing synergies and a closer collaboration on a European level.
More information on: http://www.alzheimer-europe.org/?lm2=511D4A325936

Cross-border Health for EU Patients
9th December 2008 - Brussels, Belgium
The workshop will look at the implications of the European Commission Proposal for a Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. Kent experience will also be shown.
More information on: http://www.kent.gov.uk/business/support-services-and-advice/international-business/cross-border-health-for-eu-patients.htm

Launch of the Green Paper on the EU workforce for heatlh
10th December 2008 - Brussels, Belgium
The publication of the Green Paper will launch a public consultation process to obtain everyone's views on a wide range of issues connected with the healthcare workforce and preparing for the care of an ageing population. The conference aims to contribute to the consultation process by bringing together a number of eminent specialists in the field of human resources for health and stakeholders and practitioners from Member States to discuss strategies and share experience.
More information on:
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/health_forum/open_2008/index_en.htm

EU Open Health Forum
11th December 2008 - Brussels, Belgium
This conference aims to contribute and increase the profile of health in the EU policies through discussion between EU policy makers and stakeholders on pressing public health issues and their impacts on the Community.
More information on:
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/health_forum/open_2008/index_en.htm

For further information on issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the UEMS Secretariat.