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Report of the European Health Policy Forum

Meeting held in the Centre Borchette on 11th October 2004 (9:00-17:00)

1. Recent developments in EU Health Policy

1.1. Extension of the open method of coordination ("OMC") to healthcare and long-term care

The OMC was first applied to programmes launched in the Lisbon Council in 2000. This has now been extended to healthcare. This consists into three phases: the definition of common objectives, the setting up of action plans and joint assessment. The application should be made gradually in order to achieve the goals of accessibility, quality and financial sustainability in healthcare systems. The next steps are: Spring 2005, presentation of national reports; end of 2005, proposal of the Commission on specific objectives in social protection and medical care. The OMC will be fully applied as from 2007.

CPME asked for a transparent consultation process in order that organisations be able to react in time.

1.2. Opening of structural funds to health-related projects

Mr. Hartog, Head of Unit in DG Regio, presented how structural funds are now financing health-related projects. In order to propose projects, it is important to determine the sectors contributing the most to economic and social cohesion. The work should be aimed at to DG Sanco and to the Member States as they have the final decision to grant projects.

1.3. Drugs policy

Heads of Unit in DG Sanco and JAI presented the legal framework in drugs strategy. Some problems occurred for collecting data's. The new drugs strategy is expected to be adopted by the end of the Dutch Presidency. An informal consultation will be launched on the Commission's website.

1.4. Environment and Health Action Plan

Mr. Huebel, Deputy Head of Unit in DG Sanco, presented the implementation of the specific actions in the framework of the EHAP, which consists in bringing in Research centres and providing links between Research, Environment and Health agendas. These include three main categories: improving the information provided, strengthening the Research agenda, reviewing policies and developing activities. In general, the Action Plan was favourably received and stakeholders were greatly interested. In this context, the Conference to be held in the Netherlands by the Dutch Presidency shall be preceded by an informal conference of the NGOs. Suggestions are to be sent out for 1st December.

1.5. Update of the situation on HIV/AIDS

Different mechanisms have been set up, notably a platform, a task force and think tanks. Several tools were identified: prevention, reduction of the negative impact of the epidemic, mobilisation of resources, cooperation with international bodies and funding opportunities. The Commission has named a list of its commitments: better and wider public information on prevention, assessment of public awareness, common strategies, social inclusion and employment and epidemiological surveillance. In this framework, the Commission is willing to integrate the civil society in its policy-making process.

2. Issues concerning the Open Forum and the Policy Forum

The point was come up with to extend the membership of the forum. The management of the workload as well as the working method were also discussed.

Rapporteurs of the working groups presented the work achieved by now. An interesting presentation was made by Mr. Synnott, Officer at the European Public Services Union, on healthcare and the Services Directive.

3. EU Health Strategy

Commissioner Byrne introduced the new EU Health Strategy based on the principle of “Good Health for all” and “Health is Wealth”.

General statements were given by some organisations: CPME, Eurordis, EuroHealthNet, EFPIA, BEUC, EPHA and EHMA. The overall feeling was rather positive even if the danger of highlighting too much prevention and neglecting curative care was raised.