



The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

Editorial



Dr Bernard Maillet
Secretary-General

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The holiday period is here and things will go somewhat quieter in the next weeks at the UEMS Office.

At European level, the European Parliament has been installed and some Member States have already proposed their candidates for a post of Commissioner. Also here, things will start again in September and then we will have the debate on the election of the President of the Commission.

In October, the UEMS will have its Autumn Council Meeting that will be organized in Istanbul and we are starting to prepare the agenda for that important meeting.

This will be followed end of November by the meeting of the Advisory Council for CME in Brussels.

In the meanwhile, I wish you on behalf of the entire Staff of the UEMS Office in Brussels as well as the Enlarged Executive a very nice, relaxing and refreshing holiday.

UEMS News 2009 / 05

July 2009

Health priorities of the Swedish Presidency

From 1st July to 31st December 2009, Sweden assumes the Presidency of the European Union. In doing so, the Swedish government defined the following priorities in the area of healthcare:

Healthy and Dignified Ageing

The goal of the Swedish Presidency is to enhance dignity and quality of life for elderly persons in Europe and to put this topic on the EU agenda in a longer-term perspective. Several Member States are already giving priority to efforts in ensuring high standards of care that provide dignity in old age.

An expert conference on this topic will be held on 15-16 September 2009 in Stockholm.

Alcohol-related harm

The Swedish EU Presidency therefore would like to speed up the implementation of the 2006 EU alcohol strategy and the establishment of long-term prevention at both EU and national level. It furthermore wants to give particular priority to reduce the impact of advertising and marketing on young people.

An expert conference on this topic will be held on 21-22 September 2009 in Stockholm.

Cross-border Healthcare

The Swedish Presidency will continue to pursue negotiations on the proposal for a Directive on the application of Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare.

On 6-7 July 2009, the Presidency organised an informal meeting of the EU Health Ministers in Jönköping which discussed this topic among others. (See also page 2)

Pharmaceutical Package

Several legislative proposals concerning namely pharmacovigilance, the fight against counterfeit medicines and the provision of information on prescription medicines to patients, often named "Pharmaceutical package" will also be on the table of the EU Council under the Swedish Presidency.

Antibiotic resistance and relative effectiveness of medicines

The problem of bacteria that can no longer be treated with antibiotics is growing throughout the world. The Swedish Presidency's ambition is for a decision to be taken on seeking out innovative ways to ensure the development of new effective antibiotics.

An expert conference on this topic will be held on 17 September 2009 in Stockholm.



se2009.eu

A conference will also be held on 29 July 2009 in Stockholm on relative effectiveness of medicines which will notably aim to address in particular cancer and rare diseases.

European campaigning

Finally, several issues such as the promotion of e-Health as a tool to modernise health systems and improve patient safety, the impact of climate change on the conditions for diseases that spread from animals to humans, and the outbreak of influenza A (H1N1) will also be addressed during the Swedish Presidency. □

For further information, please consult the website of the Swedish EU Presidency:

<http://www.se2009.eu>

European Court of Auditors' Report on the EU Public Health Programme

In a recent special report, the European Court of Auditors examined the European Union's Public Health Programme (PHP) for 2003-2007, managed by the European Commission.

The Court's audit asked whether the right conditions were set for health promotion actions financed from the EU budget to complement the measures taken by

Member States to protect and improve public health.

The report detailed conclusions and recommendations concerning programme design, programme implementation and project management. The audit concluded that the PHP had been set very broad and ambitious objectives that contrasted sharply with the limited means at its disposal. The

diversity of topics and the multiplicity of 'action areas', established in the annual work plans of the Commission, caused input to be diluted and led to fragmented results. Still according to the report, the programme followed many different paths and lacked strategic focus.

In view of its findings, the Court questioned the utility of certain components of European public health

programmes and invited the Commission as well as the Member States to reconsider the EU's funding approach in the field of public health. □

The ECA Report can be found at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=ECA/09/41&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Internal Market - Infringement proceedings

France - Professional qualifications

The Commission has decided to send France a letter of formal notice under Article 228 of the EC Treaty for its failure to execute the judgment of the European Court of Justice of 10.2.2009 (case C-224/08) concerning the non-communication of measures taken to implement Directive 2006/100/EC.

This Directive provides for technical adaptations to the Directives on profes-

sional qualifications further to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union on 1 January 2007. It updates, amongst others, all the lists of qualifications which benefit from automatic recognition by completing them with the corresponding Bulgarian and Romanian qualifications. The deadline for transposing Directive 2006/100/EC expired on 1st January 2007. France

has still not brought into force all the necessary provisions.

As long as the Directive is not implemented into national law, the professionals holding Bulgarian or Romanian qualifications risk of enduring needlessly bureaucratic and slow procedures before being able to exercise their right to work anywhere in the European Union and the potential users of the services of

these professionals may be deprived of the opportunity to benefit from their expertise.

If no further measures are taken, the European Court of Justice may impose a lump sum or penalty payment on France. □

The latest information on infringement proceedings concerning all Member States can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/index_en.htm

Ireland - Voluntary Health Insurance

The European Commission has decided to refer Ireland to the European Court of Justice over the exemption of the Irish Voluntary Health Insurance Board (VHI) from certain EU rules on non-life insurance (See also UEMS News 2007/01).

The referral follows the "complementary reasoned opinion" sent to Ireland in November 2008, which requested Ireland once again to establish compli-

ance with EU law. This follows a complaint to the Commission alleging that the VHI is unlawfully pursuing insurance activities without being subject to the First Non-Life Insurance Directive in particular.

The Commission considers that, due to the significant changes that have occurred in its business model, the VHI has lost its entitlement to remain exempt from the general

insurance supervisory regime, and in particular the exemption which was originally granted under the First and Third Non-Life Insurance Directives. In its reply to the Commission, the Irish government suggests that it has complied with the above mentioned Directives through the enactment of the Voluntary Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2008. The government also emphasises that, fol-

lowing the act, the VHI exemption will end and that the VHI will be subject to the standard regulatory framework. Further, that Ministerial Orders had moved the obligation to 31st March 2009 and 1st September 2009 respectively.

For these reasons, the Commission maintains that the Irish authorities have not put an end to the infringements of the Non-life Insurance Directives. □

EU Council - Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

Informal meeting of the EU health ministers (Jönköping, 6-7.07.2009)

On 6th-7th July EU ministers of health met informally in Jönköping (Sweden). The meeting was hosted by Mr Göran Hägglund, Minister for Health and Social Affairs, and Ms Maria Larsson, Minister for Elderly Care and Public Health. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss important issues, namely antibiotic resistance, preparedness for pandemic influenza, patients' rights when seeking healthcare in other EU countries, prevention of alcohol related harm and e-Health.

Cross-border healthcare

One of the issues on the agenda concerns patients' rights to healthcare in other EU countries. Last year, the EU Commission presented a proposal for a directive that would clarify the situation for patients who travel to other EU countries for healthcare. The Swedish Presidency now wants to reach a political agreement at the Council meeting in December.

“As people move between the European countries more and more, there is an increasing need for a new regulatory framework that supports the patient. To me, it is important that people should be granted compensation for healthcare received in another country.”

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance has a prominent place for all three Presidencies in the three Presidency team. The French Presidency focused on rational use of antibiotics and the Czech Presidency on resistant bacteria as a threat to patient safety. The Swedish Presidency has emphasised the need to develop new effective antibiotics. Evidence from research was shared with the ministers about the problem of antibiotic resistance and its consequences, and on the need to develop new effective antibiotics. The Presidency has commissioned a report that will present proposals on how the development of new effective antibiotics can be encouraged. The Presidency is also arranging a conference for experts in September, focusing on finance options and other incentives for the development of effective antibiotics. The results from the report and the conference will, together with an analysis

There has been a very good atmosphere. Attendance has been much better than we could have hoped for.

“

produced by the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, serve as a basis for discussion for the next EU Council in December. The Presidency's ambition is that the Council will be able to adopt conclusions on stimulus measures for access to effective antibiotics at the meeting.

As I see it, the need for new antibiotics is more urgent than any of us had previously realised.

Pandemic preparedness

Another important issue that was discussed was preparedness for pandemic influenza and the spread of the 'new influenza'.

At the meeting, the ministers were given a report on the current situation of the disease and a decision was reached to call an extra ministerial meeting focusing on the influenza. The meeting is planned for October. Important steps towards an EU strategy for pandemic preparedness were thus taken. The possibilities for coordination of communication activities at EU level will be tested in this context.



Göran Hägglund
Swedish Minister for Health and Social Affairs

Possible measures should be based on each Member State taking responsibility for planning and taking measures for its own population. An important starting point is also the ambitions of each Member State to contribute to solidarity within the EU and globally. Influenza and its effects should quickly be integrated into all the EU's policy areas so as to take charge of the multi-sectoral dimension. The Member States will continue to look into ways in which the EU can support the international community in dealing with a pandemic.

Follow up of EU alcohol strategy

Prevention of alcohol related harm was also on the agenda.

In this regard, the Presidency's ambition is that the Council adopts conclusions at its meeting in December to support the European Commission's 2006 alcohol strategy, after a status report on its implementation and the outcomes of a conference of experts on alcohol and health are released. □

Public Health - EC Initiatives

Launch of the Youth Health Initiative (Brussels, 9-10.07.2009)

On 9th July, the European Commissioner for Health, **Androulla Vassiliou**, launched an initiative aiming to involve young people more actively in developing EU health policies.

The initiative started with a 2-day Conference on Youth Health in Brussels which gathered over 200 young people, from across Europe, aged 18-25 years together with policymakers and health organisa-

tions to debate key health issues, such as the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, or physical activity and mental health. Cross cutting issues, including the financial crisis, inequalities in health, education and the role of the media were also addressed.

As part of the initiative, the Commission has set up the website **"Be Healthy - Be Yourself"** accessible from the EU Health Portal

and available in 22 languages. The website has three major parts: a conference page, a Youth Health competition page and a blog with testimonials. □

My aim is to motivate the youth of today to care about their health, engage with policy-makers and speak out on health matters.



Androulla Vassiliou
European Commissioner
for Health

In the framework of the conference, the following publications were made available:

- *A snapshot of the health of young people in Europe*
- *Conceptualizing participation - the health of children and young people*
- *A selection of youth related Projects co-funded by the European Commission's Public Health Funds*

Launch of the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer

The European Commission will be launching the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer on 29 September 2009.

While the principles and objectives of the Partnership are set out in the "Communication Action Against Cancer: European



Partnership", it is intended that the Partnership will itself determine its own key areas and

actions. Identified possible key areas and actions to be further taken forward by the Partnership include:

- Prevention
- Identification and promotion of good practice in cancer-related healthcare

- Priorities for cancer research
- Health information, collection and analysis of comparable data

Following the launch of the Partnership, the Commission is planning to hold preparatory meetings for the joint action to be held during the autumn of 2009. The joint action should start in 2010. □

[Link to the "Communication Action Against Cancer: European Partnership"](#)

Action against Alzheimer's disease and neurodegenerative conditions

The European Commission recently adopted concrete proposals to tackle Alzheimer's disease, dementias and other neurodegenerative conditions.

These shared health and social challenges in Europe call for coordinated actions to ensure efficient prevention, diag-

nosis, treatment and care for those affected. In addition, European countries are also invited to pool their resources and better coordinate their research efforts in the field of neurodegenerative diseases, and Alzheimer's in particular, by programming their research investments jointly for the first time,

instead of each separately. There are currently over seven million people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders in Europe and it is predicted that this number will double in the next 20 years. It is vital to plan, invest and cooperate in this field today both to control the social

costs of these diseases as well as to offer dignity and healthier lives to the millions of sufferers and their families. These actions that the Commission is taking up mark important new steps both in the "Europe for Patients campaign" and the new approach of Joint Programming in research. □

[Link to the "Communication on a European Initiative on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias"](#)



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

EVENT REPORTS

EHTEL Taskforce on Sustainable Telemedicine & Chronic Disease Mgt

(Brussels, 24.06.2009)

The European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL) held a meeting of its Taskforce on Sustainable Telemedicine and Chronic Disease Management on 24th June 2009 in Brussels, to which the UEMS was invited to participate as an associated organisation.

Meaning basically "care at a distance", telemedicine covers a broad spectrum of services such as teleconsultation, telehomecare and teletraining and builds on technologies such as video-conferencing supported by the exchange of medical images and medical records, as well as remote monitoring. The communication infrastructure includes ordinary telephone land-lines, internet connections of various speed and also satellite links to enable healthcare in remote and isolated areas.

The EHTEL meeting brought together representatives of health professionals, industry, health insurers, patients, European Commission and was a very good opportunity to look at areas of actions from the perspective and experience of each stakeholder. The main discussion focused on the work of the group for the EHTEL Briefing Paper on sustainable telemedicine, which encompasses a first focus on "changing care processes" and a second one on "the enabling environment" and is based on studies on telemedicine, good practices or models based on patients' real-life cases.

Although telemedicine services have been successfully piloted in various countries, they are still not widely used across the EU. Participants pointed out the need for joint efforts to unlock the barriers for political commitment, adoption and further implementation of telemedicine. It was also underlined that telemedicine services should not be seen separately, but rather integrated alongside all other health regular services.

In this regard, the UEMS holds the firm position that it should be made sure that "the use of e-Health and other telemedicine services: (a) adhere to the same professional medical quality and safety standards as those in use for non-electronic healthcare provision. (b) offer adequate protection to patients, notably through the introduction of appropriate regulatory requirements for practitioners similar to those in use for non-electronic healthcare provision." (See UEMS 2008/55)

Further to the adoption of this claim in the draft directive on cross-border healthcare by the European Parliament in first reading, the UEMS is now seeking greater endorsement by EU stakeholders and decision-makers, namely the Member States, in order to ensure that these concerns are fully taken into consideration in this or any other relevant EU initiative. □

*For further information,
please contact the UEMS
Secretariat.*



NEXT MEETINGS OF THE UEMS

UEMS Council Meeting

15th-17th October 2009 - Istanbul, Turkey

Upon invitation only

- Restricted to UEMS Members

UEMS Advisory Council on CME

28th November 2009 - Brussels, Belgium

Upon invitation only

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER!

The Members of the UEMS Executive as well as the UEMS Brussels Office would like to convey to you their best wishes for good and relaxing holidays.

Please kindly note that the Secretariat of the UEMS will be closed for its annual summer leave

from 10th till 14th of August 2009.