

## Editorial

### European Antibiotic Awareness Day, 18 November 2008

The first-ever European Antibiotic Awareness Day will take place across the European Union on 18 November 2008. European Antibiotic Awareness Day will be an annually recurring event to raise awareness about the risks associated with inappropriate use of antibiotics and how to take antibiotics responsibly. In 2008, European Antibiotic Awareness Day will set focus specifically on the need for everybody to stop any unnecessary use of antibiotics.

European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a European health initiative coordinated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in close collaboration with the European Commission, Member States, World Health Organisation, as well as many other relevant representative stakeholder groups such as health professionals and scientists. The emphasis is on a partnership approach involving all the relevant stakeholders. 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.

#### ■ Keeping antibiotics effective is everyone's responsibility

The latest data released by the European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (EARSS <http://www.rivm.nl/earss>) confirm that the number of patients infected by resistant bacteria is increasing and that antibiotic resistance has already become a major threat to public health in Europe.

Taking antibiotics for the wrong reasons or incorrectly causes bacteria to become resistant to antibiotic treatments. So when we do need antibiotics they may no longer work. For this reason, antibiotics are losing their effectiveness at a pace that was unforeseen even five years ago. If this problem is not taken seriously and we continue to consume antibiotics at the current rate, Europe will face a return to the pre-antibiotic era.

Responsible use of antibiotics can help stop resistant

bacteria from developing and help keep antibiotics effective for the use of future generations. On this basis, it is important to inform about when it is appropriate to take antibiotics and how to take antibiotics responsibly. Successful public awareness campaigns, which have already taken place in some European Union countries, have resulted in a reduction of antibiotic consumption. When people are informed about the issue they are willing to play their part in addressing it. The priority now is for all the stakeholders acting together in unison, to ensure that the message about responsible antibiotic use is heard by everyone in Europe.



#### ■ How will European Antibiotic Awareness Day help?

The annual European Antibiotic Awareness Day will raise the profile of all the national and regional campaigns on rational antibiotic use already happening in Europe, as well as catalysing new activities. European Antibiotic Awareness Day will build upon the solid experience of Member States in this area with a view to encouraging sharing of best practices and providing support for the Member States that have no national campaigns as yet on rational antibiotic use.

#### ■ What will happen on 18 November 2008?

A scientific briefing and press conference will take place at the European Parliament, Strasbourg, France. Member States are planning national activities, for example national conferences, press conferences, that will take place on the same day in Europe's capitals. Several countries will launch their yearly national public awareness campaign on the prudent use of antibiotics on 18 November 2008.



A European Health Initiative 

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For more information, please click [here](#).

### Health First Europe New Horizons Congress: "Tackling the healthcare challenges of today for a healthier tomorrow"

This one-day HFE event, to be held at the Committee of the Regions building in Brussels on **12 November 2008**, will address the needs and issues of patients, healthcare workers and the industry in terms of the delivery of quality healthcare services. Three panel sessions will be organised, tackling these issues. Panellists will be invited to advocate their vision and interact with other stakeholders, the aim of the Congress being to highlight the different obstacles faced by healthcare stakeholders in order to increase the dialogue and exchange best practices between participants.

Some of the speakers that have already confirmed their attendance are: Androula Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Health, Dr Stanislava Panova, Director, Health Care Department, Ministry of Health, Czech Republic, David Byrne, HFE Patron and former European Commissioner for Health and Consumer

Protection, Dr Margaret Chan, Director WHO.

*To get a glimpse of the draft programme, please click [here](#).*

HFE members are invited to attend this exclusive HFE Congress. *For more information on registration, please click [here](#).*

Any other questions regarding the Congress should be sent to the [Secretariat](#).

### Health First Europe General Assembly 2008

The General Assembly of HFE will take place next on 25 November in Brussels and all HFE members are invited to attend.

The General Assembly will be held at the premises of the European Union of Private Hospitals, 1 Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.

## HFE Member News

### IAPO response to the World Medical Association Consultation on the Draft Revision of the Declaration of Helsinki

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) recently responded to the World Medical Association's consultation on the draft revision of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) to provide a patient-centred perspective on this important document. The Declaration sets out the ethical principles for medical research involving humans and is primarily addressed to physicians. We would like to thank those members who provided valuable insights and suggestions and helped shape IAPO's response.

*For more information and to download the response, please click [here](#).*

(Source: IAPO's newsletter)

### Eucomed MedTech Forum 2008



Eucomed organised the MedTech Forum & General Assembly 2008 which took place from 13-16 October in Brussels, Belgium.

The event brought together Eucomed members, people from the European Medical Technology industry, decision-makers and other interested parties to discuss how to motivate the industry and how to extend its reach to Europe and beyond. The week ended with the Eucomed statutory General Assembly which was followed by a Gala dinner.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

## EU Health News

### DG SANCO is seeking views on its annual work plan 2009 priorities

The European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) is seeking views on priorities for its 2009 annual work plan, as part of the Health Programme 2008-2013 which promotes civil society's involvement in health policy-making. The Health Programme is implemented by means of

an annual Work Plan which sets out the areas to be funded and gives an indicative budget for each financing mechanism. The scope of the work plan must fall within the objectives of the overall programme, i.e. improving citizens' health security, promoting health, and generating and disseminating



health information and knowledge.

The European Commission has also published the preliminary orientations for the priorities of the Work Plan 2009. Among others, these include rare diseases, mental health, cancer and chronic diseases and the European Health Information System. Stakeholders' comments had to be sent to the European Commission by 30 September 2008. *To consult the Health Programme 2008-2013, please click [here](#).*  
*To consult in full the preliminary orientations, please click [here](#).*

### **The European Parliament has appointed the Rapporteur for the proposed Health Services Directive**

On 26 August, John Bowis MEP (EPP-ED, UK) has been appointed the European Parliament's Rapporteur for the draft Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, in the Parliament's Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI).

The draft Directive seeks to provide sufficient clarity about patients' rights concerning reimbursement and to ensure high quality, safe and efficient care across the EU.

It establishes new reimbursement rules for the cross-border health-care:

- Citizens of one EU Member State do not need prior authorisation to seek any non-hospital care in another Member State, and they may be reimbursed to the same level provided by their own health-care system;
- Similarly, citizens of an EU Member State are entitled any hospital care they may need in another Member States, as well as the same level of reimbursement provided by their own system.

There are certain exceptions concerning the reimbursement rules for hospital care, namely, Member States may put in place a system of prior authorisation for reimbursement if:

- The care could have been provided and reimbursed in the home country;
- The outflow of patients is such that it puts at risk either the finances of the National Social Security Systems or the planning of hospital capacity.

No decision has been taken on the timeline for this draft Directive in the ENVI Committee. The Secretariat assumes that the Committee will vote on its report and amendments in the beginning of next year and final adoption by plenary is expected to take place before the June 2009 elections. Given that John Bowis will not run for the next European elections, we assume that the Committee counts on adoption of the proposal in first reading.

*To read the draft directive, please click [here](#).*  
*For more information, please [contact the Secretariat](#).*

### **Developments on the European Commission's initiative on the establishment of benchmarks for a possible collective redress system**

The European Commission's DG Health and Consumers, has published a feedback document on stakeholders' views on the benchmarks for a possible collective redress system put forward for discussion at the beginning of this year.

70 stakeholders sent comments on the benchmarks to the Commission, showing that while consumers generally seem to agree with the benchmarks, industry appears to be of the view that the Commission has acted prematurely in setting them up. In industry's view, the benchmarks should not have been set down until the outcome of its two commissioned studies on the current collective redress mechanisms was clear or until a proper review was undertaken on the implementation of existing relevant EU legislation. Legal stakeholders have welcomed the benchmarks, but call for clearer definition of the concepts used.

DG SANCO will soon publish two studies on the existing collective redress mechanisms and the need for an EU-wide instrument, which could form the basis for further action taken by the DG in this field.

Following the stakeholders' consultation, the Commission held three separate workshops on 21 May, 29 May and 6 June 2008, with consumer organisations, industry and legal practitioners respectively. The aim of the workshops was to inform stakeholders on the results of the benchmark consultation and the progress of the two ongoing studies, and to discuss specific issues on consumer collective redress that were of interest to each separate group of stakeholders.

The first workshop dealt with problems related to funding of collective redress actions, status of representative parties and distribution of proceeds. The second one addressed such issues as costs of proceedings, out-of-court settlements, compensation and unmeritorious claims, while the third one looked into conditions for the admission of claims, compensation and other types of possible remedies, distribution and length of proceedings.

*To read the feedback document, please click [here](#).*  
*To read the documents concerning the progress of the studies, please click [here](#).*  
*To read the summary of the stakeholder workshop, please click [here](#).*  
*To read more on the European Commission's initiatives on collective redress, please click [here](#).*

## **The World Health Organisation Regional Committee for Europe held its Annual Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe held its annual meeting between 15 and 18 September 2008.

This year, the 53 WHO Member States from the European Region addressed health systems' governance in the European Region and the role of health systems in the promotion of healthy behaviours.

At this year's meeting, a Resolution on stewardship/governance of health systems in the WHO European Region was adopted, calling on the Member States to:

- strengthen the governance of the health system by health ministries, along the lines set forth in the Tallinn Charter adopted in June 2008;
- ensure that the international recruitment of health workers is guided by ethical considerations and cross-country solidarity, and by a code of practice;
- encourage health promotion and disease prevention;
- ensure universal access to health promotion, disease prevention and health services as a fundamental means to achieving equity in health.

*To consult the Draft Report of this year's meeting, please click [here](#).*

*To read the Tallinn Charter, please click [here](#).*

*To read the resolution, please click [here](#).*

## **The EU Ministers of Health held informal meeting in Angers**

On 8 and 9 September, the EU Ministers of Health held an informal meeting at the Centre des Congrès in Angers.

The meeting was part of the 18-month programme in the field of health prepared by the French Presidency in collaboration with the upcoming Czech and Swedish Presidencies.

The general objective of the programme, due to last until the end of 2009, is to contribute to a high level of health for all European citizens. In line with this objective, the first meeting of the High Level Group on Public Health will be organised on 9 December 2008 and will examine the major challenges of tomorrow's health, as well as the collective ministerial responses.

The Angers meeting focused on public health security, one of the priorities set by the French Presidency in the health field, with the aim to assess coordination of cross-border public health risk management within the European Union.

On this occasion, Health Ministers participated in a practical exercise simulating management of two cases of serious threat to public health at European Level [yellow fever and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)].

As regards the national management measures, a wide variety of the chosen management options was observed. Capacity to communicate in a sufficiently convergent manner and feasibility of certain measures were also questioned. Following the exercise, the Ministers concluded that rapid and coordinated communication at European level was essential for the efficient management of European public health security crises.

After the exercise, the ministers discussed the potential risks and the ways in which coordination could be enhanced at European level.

On the basis of these discussions, the Presidency will compile and present some conclusions on public health security to the Health Council of the European Union at its next meeting on 15 and 16 December in Brussels.

The Angers meeting was also an occasion to announce the priority measures that are to be taken by the French Presidency in five areas of health: Alzheimer's disease, health and safety, health in Europe at the service of patients, medicines, and everything based around health drivers.

*To consult the documents of the informal meeting, please click [here](#).*

## **European Parliament votes on report on the mid-term review of the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010**

On 4 September, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the own-initiative report on the mid-term review of the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010.

The Report assesses the actions taken by the Commission with respect to the implementation of its 2004 Action Plan, which tackles the impact of environmental pollution on health.

While acknowledging the efforts of the European Commission since the Plan was launched, the Report holds that the latter is designed solely to accompany existing Community policies and regrets that it is not based on a preventive policy intended to reduce illnesses linked to environmental factors.

Therefore, the MEPs called on the European Commission to adopt an approach to health protection from environmental risks based on a precautionary principle; to develop and implement tools enabling potential environmental and health threats to be anticipated and countered; to adapt the European risk-reduction policy; and to raise awareness of the general public concerning environmental pollution and the potential impact on their health.

*To know more about the MEPs' positions on the Action Plan, please click [here](#).*

## **European Parliament Plenary votes report on the European Commission White Paper on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues**

On 25 September, the European Parliament voted in favour of the own-initiative report on the White Paper on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues, presented by Alessandro FOGLIETTA (UEN, IT) in the European Parliament's plenary session, on behalf of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI).

The report addresses diet-related chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes. It calls on Member States to recognise obesity as a chronic disease and recommends the adoption of early measures aimed at preventing obesity. These measures would include, among others:

- setting up a policy focused on food quality;
- setting up a High-Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity, aimed at improving knowledge and exchange of best practices in the fight against obesity;
- establishing clearer food labelling rules;
- establishing VAT reductions for fruit and vegetables;
- establishing restrictions on advertising unhealthy food to children and better food in schools and kindergartens;
- promoting and supporting more research in the field of obesity-related health risks.

*To read the White Paper, please click [here](#).*

*To read the Report and the results of the vote in the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, please click [here](#).*

## **European Parliament's plenary debates with Council and Commission the draft directive on cross-border healthcare**

On 25 September, in the European Parliament plenary session, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission presented their views on the topical issue of the draft Directive concerning the application

of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. Initiatives related to cross-border healthcare are part of the Social Package launched by the European Commission earlier this year, which includes 19 initiatives aiming at putting the social dimension back on the European agenda.

Speaking on behalf of the French Presidency, Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, the French Minister for Health, addressed criticisms that the draft directive only tackles the mobility of patients and not that of healthcare workers. In this respect, she suggested that a directive focusing only on patients would have better chances of being adopted before next June's European elections.

In response to the debate by the MEPs, she stressed that the draft Directive doesn't seek to encourage patient mobility in itself, but to make sure that if patients have to get care in another Member State, they will not be denied this right and they will be able to make an informed choice. The same argument was advanced by Commissioner for Health Androulla Vassiliou and MEP John Bowis, the European Parliament's Rapporteur for the draft Directive.

Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin further stressed that, while the draft Directive provides legal certainty, more has to be done to assure interoperability between Member States' healthcare systems.

She also agreed with some MEPs that the adoption of the draft directive must not negatively affect the access to care for disadvantaged categories of patients, such as people with disability, the elderly or the poor.

Commissioner for Health, Androulla Vassilou, dismissed some MEPs' criticisms that the draft Directive would be a second "Bolkenstein Directive", pointing out that, on the contrary, it aims at making citizens feel that Europe is actually doing something for them.

Following the debate in Parliament, MEPs voted on a resolution on the whole social package, which was rejected.

*To read more about the debate, please click [here](#).*

## **Calendar of upcoming Events**

**18/11/08:** National Strategies and Plans for Rare Diseases in Europe, State of the Art and Sharing Experiences: Toward EU Recommendations

The conference is organized in the context of the French Presidency, and of the upcoming adoption by the European Commission of a Communication and a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Rare Diseases on 5 November.

The Commission's Communication and Proposal will be presented at the conference, along with the European Project for Rare Diseases National Plans Development.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

**10-11/12/08:**The conference on "Developing and Implementing Health in the European Union", organised in the context of the EU Open Health Forum, will be held in Brussels, Belgium

The EU Open Health Forum is an annual conference and exhibition event organised by the European Commission's Directorate General Health and Consumers, and is a key element of the EU Health Forum, an information and consultation mechanism seeking to ensure that the aims of the Community's health strategy are made clear to the public and respond to their concerns.

The conference "Developing and Implementing Health in the European Union" will mark an important step towards strengthening the involvement of all stakeholders in contributing to the development and implementation of the EU health strategy.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

**For more information, please visit [www.healthfirsteurope.org](http://www.healthfirsteurope.org)**

