

Editorial

Health Technology Assessment (HTA)

As the first reading vote on the Directive on cross-border healthcare will take place in the European Parliament on 12 March, everyone working in the field of health in the EU is sitting up and paying attention to the potential Directive. This piece of legislation will be a major milestone to clarify and increase the rights of patients who seek medical treatment abroad.

Health First Europe is a strong advocate of patient access to treatments that reduce recuperation time, increase productivity and generally extend and augment the overall health of patients. This covers areas as diverse as patient safety, innovation and research, and health delivery.

As one would expect of HFE, our main ambition for this Directive is that it improves patient access to best practice treatments and services. To this end, it must ensure that such treatments are available to the public. This is not simply about reimbursement, the area of most controversy in the dossier, but is also about making sure that access is available locally, rather than merely accepting that patients are willing to travel to seek better treatment.

Different issues are being discussed at this moment but one that did not attract so much attention is refers to a European network of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) [1], the EU supported programme for EU HTA agencies, which will have an impact on the future of European healthcare.

HFE has been involved in this issue already, having attended the meeting of EUnetHTA in Rome in June 2008. The objective of this network is to share information and best practices, and to support policy decisions by the Member States.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is the systematic evaluation of properties, effects and impacts of health care technology [2]. For a number of years, national and local healthcare decision-makers and players have increasingly used HTA as a basis for their funding and market access decisions on healthcare technologies, therefore

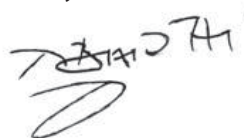
having a significant impact on patients' access to new technologies.

HFE is concerned about the impact of greater use of HTA on patient access, but also expects that, at the very least, stakeholder groups such as HFE will have the ability to participate on an equal basis in the EU deliberations on the future of HTA collaboration. This draft Directive gives us a greater chance to reconsider the process of HTA, its relation to decision-making, and the rigour and transparency of this process.

We hope that the European Parliament will take the opportunity to ensure that stakeholders, such as patient groups and healthcare professionals, can effectively participate in the development of the process for future EU supported HTA efforts.

There is little doubt that the quality of deliberations and outcomes are more valuable and sustainable when experts from the various stakeholder communities can participate on a continual and formal basis. We encourage, as we do with all patient access issues, all EU officials to consider this principle when debating and deciding on the future form of the Directive on cross-border healthcare.

Sincerely,



Mary Banotti
Honorary President of Health First Europe

[1] This article (no.17) is aimed at establishing a European network of national (HTA) agencies to cooperate on assessments of health technologies (e.g. drugs, medical devices, procedures)

[2] International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment (INAHTA) defined HTA as: "The systematic evaluation of properties, effects, and/or impacts of healthcare technology. It may address the direct, intended consequences of technologies as well as their indirect, unintended consequences. Its main purpose is to inform technology-related policymaking in healthcare. HTA is conducted by interdisciplinary groups using explicit analytical frameworks drawing from a variety of methods" www.inahta.org

Next Steps on Patient Safety in the EU: "Better PRACTICE, BETTER Communication"

"Eradicating HCAIs in the 21st Century"

Health First Europe (HFE) is pleased to announce that together with MEPs Liz Lynne and Amalia Sartori, they are organising an exclusive roundtable on various patient safety issues at the European Parliament in Brussels. The roundtable, entitled "Next Steps on Patient Safety in the EU: Better PRACTICE, BETTER communication", will address patient safety and the eradication of Healthcare associated infections (HCAIs) in the 21st century. It will take place on 17 March 2009 under the auspices of the recently released European Commission Communication and Recommendation on Patient Safety.

The high profile speakers at the roundtable, in addition to the two co-hosting MEPs Sartori and Lynne, will be Dr Carl Suetens, Senior Expert at the Surveillance Unit of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), who will present ECDC's work on patient safety, and Dr Achyut Guleri, Consultant Clinical Microbiologist at Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Hon. Senior Clinical Lecturer, who will talk about practical experiences in combating HCAIs.



healthcare providers. Last but not least, the HFE theme of "Health equals wealth" was emphasised, given that health is a productive economic factor in terms of employment, innovation and economic growth.

To illustrate these topics, some of the HFE members contributed demonstration material about their specific area of work, such as the International Alliance of Patients Organisation (IAPO), the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN), the European Federation of Public Service Employees Union (EUROFEDOP) and Eucomed.

The Exhibition was attended by such MEPs as Marian Harkin (ALDE, Ireland), Alojz Peterle (EPP-ED, Slovenia), Mieczyslaw Janowski (UEN, Poland), Witold Tomczak (ID Group, Poland) and Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (EPP-ED, Spain), as well as assistants of MEPs, European Parliament officials and visitors to the European Parliament.

HFE Exhibition at the Parliament

Health First Europe (HFE), under the patronage of MEP Liz Lynne, had a display at the European Parliament in Brussels at the beginning of January with the aim of raising awareness on the future of health in Europe. At the opening of the exhibition, MEP Liz Lynne, who is also Vice-President of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee and Co-Chair of MEPs against Cancer, stated that: *"Health First Europe is a hugely important organisation doing good work in helping represent the opinions and needs of patients, healthcare professionals and medical academics and experts from across the European Union"*.

The focus of the exhibition was finding a solution to the general weaknesses in European healthcare systems which need to be rethought in order to meet current and future health challenges. For example, patients and clinicians should have equitable access to modern, innovative and reliable medical technologies. The development of new and flexible modes of healthcare delivery should benefit both patients and

New AD COM and Vice Presidents for HFE elected

On 16 January 2009, the members of the Executive Committee appointed the members of the Advisory Committee and confirmed the position of the three Vice-Presidents.

The new AD COM consists of Judy Birch (Pelvic Pain Network), Roy Bridges (Medical Technology Group), Mark Grossien (EUCOMED), Paul de Raeve (European Federation of Nurses Associations), Sebastian Rohde (Individual Member), Jos Spaan (European Alliance for Medical and Biological Engineering and Science) and Zeger Vercouteren (EUCOMED).

The new Vice Presidents are: Bert van Caelenberg (European Federation of Public Service Employees), Jos Spaan (EAMBES) and Albert van der Zeijden (International Alliances of Patients' Organisation).

The European Federation of Crohns and Ulcerative Colitis Associations (EFCCA) continues work on its Metagenomics of the Human Intestinal Tract project

EFCCA has an interest in the patient perspective of early inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and therefore want to continue working on this successful European Commission (EC) funded research project (200-2011). The next steps of the EFCCA will be a study of the correlation between microbiota and IBD. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

European Federation of Nurses Association (EFN) organised the TAIEX Peer Review Experts' meeting

EFN held an important meeting on an "ideal model" for the accreditation of the Nursing Schools and Curricula within the EU in mid December 2008. The goal was to brainstorm the topic and thus provide input for the Revision Report of Directive 36 (DG Internal Market) before 2012. Participants were EFN Members experts on the EU Nursing Education Accession Peer Reviews. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

European Federation of Public Service Employees (Eurofedop) organises a Trade Union Seminar

Eurofedop will organise, in cooperation with Njegoš Potežica, president of the Trade Union for Employees in State Administration of Serbia and member of the Executive Committee of Eurofedop, a seminar for fellow trade union members and delegates in the public service. This seminar is a succession of the last 2 successful seminars organised by Eurofedop. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

International Association of Patients' Organisations (IAPO) calls for better Protection of Patients from Counterfeit Medical Products on World Health Organisation (WHO)

Jeremiah Mwangi, IAPO Senior Policy Officer, recently participated at the 124th session of the WHO Executive Board in Geneva, Switzerland. On that occasion and on behalf of IAPO, Mr. Mwangi requested the WHO Executive Board and the Member States to take action in protecting patients from counterfeit medical products and the dangers related to their use. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

News from the European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL) and the Board of Directors

The EHTEL board has elected a new Vice-President. The new board is as follows: President: Martin Denz (Swiss Society for Telemedicine and eHealth, CH); Vice-President: Mario Romao (Intel, BE); and Treasurer: Marjan Sušelj (ZZZS, SI). *For more information, please click [here](#).*

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) will increase efficiency and effectiveness of machine-readable product marking with its ISO 28219

With its new international standard 'ISO 28219', ISO wants to facilitate the machine reading of products. The purpose of it is to have machine readable content, human readable content, and on top of that, the physical characteristics of the symbols for direct marking and labelling of items, parts and components. In today's world the industry uses machine readable products globally and ISO covers this trend with ISO 29219. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

Eucomed press release - "Embrace Telemedicine" urge Eucomed and EHRA at Czech Presidency's eHealth conference

Eucomed wants to facilitate access to telemedicine in the European Healthcare systems. Telemedicine is the future of cardiac rhythm management with economic benefits, enhanced patient safety and decreased physician workload. At the Czech Presidency's ministerial Conference in Prague: 'eHealth for Individuals, Society and Economy', Eucomed's Cardiac Rhythm Management Telemonitoring Group's Chair, Markus Siebert, , promoted the device monitoring as safe, economical and clinically effective and therefore asked all healthcare systems across Europe to actively use this technology. *For more information, please click [here](#).*

CZECH PRESIDENCY: Czech Presidency presents its health priorities

On 8 January, the Czech EU Presidency, which will run until June 2009, presented its health priorities which include financial sustainability of health systems, eHealth and antibiotic resistance.

Financial Sustainability of health systems

Current and upcoming demographic changes, the need for innovation aiming at ensuring access to the high quality of health services and increasing expectations of patients have a big financial impact on the European healthcare system. Hence effective instruments to ensure lasting financial sustainability of these systems will be a priority of the Czech Presidency and its cooperation with the previous and the next EU Presidencies (i.e. France and Sweden). While tackling this issue, the European principle of solidarity also has to be taken into account.

EHealth

In the area of eHealth, special emphasis will be put on the interoperability of health information systems that would allow more effective sharing of information between different health centres. The Czech Presidency promotes eHealth by organising the "eHealth for Individuals, Society and Economy" conference in Prague in February. On that occasion, the Prague Declaration was adopted. The Declaration aims at a more efficient use of communication technologies in the EU. This would lead to a more economic and effective healthcare sector. There should be a better knowledge exchange and also some common standards for people who work with eHealth. The national systems which are already in use throughout the different Member States should also be able to communicate with each other and be integrated into an eHealth area.

The next steps by the Member States and the EU are to be taken in the following three areas: fulfilling existing strategic goals and setting new ones; patient safety and empowerment; and governance structure for eHealth.

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

Directives in the Pipeline

Both the Organisation of Working Time Directive and the draft report on the Directive on the Application of Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare are currently under discussion in the European institutions at the moment. The first Directive is being dealt with in the European Commission and European Parliament Conciliation Committee and the second is attracting a lot of attention from all European Parliament Committees involved (ENVI, JURI, EMPL and IMCO) in the draft report.

The Organisation of Working Time Directive still has some unresolved issues. In particular, the questions of 'on-call time' and 'compensatory rest' need to be agreed on, because they directly affect the organisation of key public services across the EU. According to the Rapporteur and MEP leading the negotiations within the conciliation committee on behalf of the European Parliament, Alejandro Cercas (PSE, ES), an agreement will not be easy to reach. If the Conciliation Committee fails to make a final decision within 6 weeks of their first meeting, which took place on 19 January, the Directive will fall.

The draft report on the Directive on the Application of Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare was overrun with amendments which caused most of the Committees to reschedule their voting date. The vote by the lead committee (ENVI) is on the 12 March, to vote by the European Parliament Plenary is foreseen to take place on 23 April.

The Council is working on the dossier at the moment and the main disagreements between different Member States are: the national quality standard of healthcare services (article 5), the definition of hospital and non-hospital care (article 8); and which national contact point should provide exactly what information (article 12).

The Czech government, which holds the presidency of the Council of Ministers, wants a political agreement among Member States, but is not convinced that they will be able to do so before July.

To read the full Opinion of the Commission, please click [here](#).

To read the status of the Working Time Directive, please click [here](#).

To see the status of the proposal for a directive, please click [here](#).

PATIENT SAFETY: Rapporteur released Report

Rapporteur Amalia Sartori (EPP-ED, Italy) released her draft report on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on Patient Safety, including the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAIs) on 30 January. Patient safety nowadays is a major concern in health policy in the EU, which can be seen in the release of the proposal for a Council Recommendation and the related Communication on Patient Safety and HCAIs in December 2008. The Czech EU Presidency has made patient safety one of the main priorities on its agenda.

As noted at the beginning of this newsletter, HFE is organising, together with MEP Sartori and MEP Liz Lynne, a roundtable discussion on patient safety, to take place on 17 March in the European Parliament.

MEP Amalia Sartori is in the process of reviewing the amendments to her report (the deadline for submission of amendments was 24 February). The

amendments are expected to be voted on in the ENVI Committee on 30/31 March. Pending the results of this vote, the Rapporteur hopes that the dossier will be tabled to the Plenary on 23 April 2009.

The Communication was drafted with the aim of examining the current situation on patient safety and healthcare-associated infections with no additional legislative process to be derived from. But within approximately two years there should a follow-up communication on the quality of health which should include further consideration of these issues.. According to the EU Treaty and the Council's Rules of Procedure, the Council is asked to consult the European Parliament by May 2009, failing which the former reserves the right to adopt the Recommendation. Under the Consultation Procedure, the Council is not legally bound to take account of the European Parliament's opinion but cannot make a decision without having first consulted the European Parliament. Unlike Directives and Recommendations, Commission Communications and Council Recommendations are not legally binding for the Member States.

The Recommendation on the other hand may quite possibly be adopted by the EU Council's meeting on 9 June.

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

To read the proposal for a Council Recommendation, please click [here](#).

For more information on the Recommendation legislative procedure, please click [here](#).

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

For more information on the roundtable event, please read HFE news further up.

Antibiotic resistance

The current Presidency intends to continue the campaign on preventing anti-microbial resistance caused by the excessive use of antibiotics. This is a priority of both the EU and the World Health Organisation, which have been encouraging Member States to implement national programmes on anti-microbial resistance. In this framework, the Czech Presidency will work towards drafting standards for hospital antibiotic programmes and recommending effective funding models of national antibiotic programmes by national governments and healthcare payers.

The European Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on patient safety and healthcare associated infections was submitted to the European Parliament and the European Council in December 2008 and is now expected to be adopted by the European Council in June 2009. Patient Safety as well as the quality of health services should be improved by using relevant measures, and the Member States should be encouraged to participate in the on-going dialogue and the reinforcement of the confidence of European Union citizens. It will be tackled at a meeting of Chief Medical Officers and Specialists to be

held on 16 and 17 March in Prague. In addition the presidency is planning to submit a Progress Report on the adoption of the Draft Directive on the Quality and Safety of Organs intended for Donation and Transplantation and of the related Action Plan at the Council meeting in June 2009. The Czech Republic will also host the 11th Annual Conference of European Organ Exchange Organisations from 23 to 24 April in Prague.

To read more on the Czech Presidency's priorities, please click [here](#).

To read more on the Europe's Healthcare Future conference, please click [here](#).

To read more on the eHealth for Individuals, Society and Economy conference, please click [here](#).

To read the Speech of the Czech Minister of Health Tomáš Julínek at the ENVI Committee, please click [here](#)

RARE DISEASES: European Commission publishes Draft Report on Rare Diseases

Rapporteur Trakatellis Antonios (EPP-ED) published the draft report on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European action in the field of rare diseases on behalf of the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) on 4 February. The report is to be adopted in the Committee on 31 March 2009, and then to be tabled to the European Parliament plenary before the end of the parliamentary term.

The report is based on both the European Commission adoption of a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on rare diseases in November 2008. They are aimed at setting out an overall community strategy to support Member States for more effective and efficient recognition, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and research of rare diseases.

In the EU an estimated 29 million people suffer from rare diseases. So far the lack of specific health policies for rare diseases and the scarcity of expertise lead to barriers such as delayed diagnosis and difficult access to care.

The Communication promotes the following three main fields of work and outlines proposed actions: improving recognition and visibility on rare diseases; supporting policies on rare diseases in Member States; and developing European cooperation on rare diseases and disease information networks.

While this legislative process (consultation procedure) is occurring, other actions related to rare diseases are taking place, for example, the launch of the book 'The Voice of 12,000 Patients' on 3 March by the Commissioner for Health Androulla Vassiliou or the implementation of the Dublin Declaration to fight HIV/AIDS.

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

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS: The annual report on Sexually Transmitted Infections in Europe has been published

On 28 January the European Surveillance of Sexually Transmitted Infections (ESSTI) network released its annual report on "Sexually Transmitted Infections in Europe". It presents information provided by STI surveillance collaborators in Europe and covers the years 1998 to 2007. It aims to describe basic trends and epidemiological features of the three main bacterial sexually transmitted infections; chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis, in the 24 ESSTI participating countries and the Czech Republic.

For this reason the data is presented in three disease-specific chapters; chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis.

- Chlamydia infection is mostly found in young people and in particular young women. The overall rates of reported chlamydia infection have increased in all European countries except for Estonia and Latvia over the past ten years. However, it is difficult to state whether this is due to a genuine increase in incidence, increased testing, a change in the diagnostic test used and/or the introduction of

screening in a number of countries.

- Gonorrhoea, on the other hand, is more commonly reported in men and the number of reported cases of gonorrhoea has increased in a number of countries in the last year, although no consistent trend across Europe has been seen.

- The number of reported syphilis cases has stabilised in many Western European countries following increases in the early 2000s.

Due to the importance of this situation, emphasised by the release of this report, DG SANCO continues its discussions on sexual health for young people and is inviting stakeholders to participate in the ongoing debate. Following the debate at the 'roundtable on safer sex for young people' and a workshop on sexual health held in 2008, DG SANCO is seeking to enlarge the group of experienced and competent stakeholders who wish to participate in future meetings in form of a sexual health forum. The next sexual health forum is planned for 13 March 2009 in Brussels.

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

To read about the workshop on sexual health in 2008, please click [here](#).

For more information on the sexual health forum, please click [here](#).

Calendar of upcoming Events

01-04/04/09: International eHealth Telemedicine and Health ICT Forum

The International eHealth Telemedicine and Health ICT Forum for Education, Networking and Business focuses on eHealth and telemedicine applications and a wide range of other medical ICT applications and on the convergence of information and communication technology with medical applications, which lead to higher quality of care, cost reductions, workflow efficiency, and widespread availability of healthcare services. It is organised by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) and is supported by the European Union.

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

13-14/05/09: World Health Care Congress Europe

For the 5th consecutive year, the World Health Care Congress Europe offers an exclusive networking opportunity for health care thought leaders from distinct stakeholder groups and government officials. It is the only major international forum where over 600 health leaders share best-practices and successful initiatives for improved delivery and outcomes in Europe. The 2009 Congress highlights leading global strategies for performance management, innovations in health care technology, chronic disease management and health care financing. Participating thought-leaders include: health ministers, leading government officials, hospital directors, IT innovators, decision makers from public and private insurance funds, pharmaceutical and medical device companies, and health care industry suppliers.

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

28-30/05/09: 19th Alzheimer Europe Conference

The 19th Alzheimer Europe conference on people with dementia and a special focus on their carers will be organised in Brussels. The conference will last two days and it will mainly be an exchange of experience on how to overcome existing problems as well as existing solutions. The quality of dealing with dementia patients in every field (diagnosis, treatment and care) should be improved and to find a way to do so will be the aim of the conference. In addition experts on dementia from Belgium and other parts of Europe will present their new research projects.

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

21-23/06/09: IADIS International Conference on eHealth 2009

The International Association for Development of the Information Society (IADIS) is organising an international conference on eHealth. The two focuses of the conference are on: Computer Science and Information Systems. The use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in Healthcare Services is the main mechanism to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The goal is to bring together information systems, practitioners and management experts from all quadrants involved in developing computer technology to improve healthcare quality.

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

07-10/07/09: The 11th European Congress of Psychology

The Norwegian Psychological Association hosts the 11th European Congress on Psychology under the auspices of The European Federation of Psychological Associations (EFPA).

The conference aims at sketching the current situation of psychology which meets the title of the congress: A rapidly changing world – challenges for psychology. The programme will include lectures, symposia and paper/poster presentations on a wide variety of themes, and in addition strings on "Peace, Human Rights and Psychology", "Contemporary Changes and Diversity in Everyday Lives", and "Teaching Psychology".

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

For more information, please visit www.healthfirsteurope.org