

## Editorial

### Health First Europe

This has been an exciting year for Health First Europe. Together we have achieved many of the objectives we set out for the organisation at the beginning of the year. Looking back, we began 2010 by celebrating the adoption by the EPSCO Council of the Directive implementing the Framework Agreement on the prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector. As an issue we have been campaigning extensively for since 2004, this was a considerable achievement.

Other important hallmarks for 2010 included the Written Declaration on the EU health Workforce which we fully supported, the statement on Health Technology Assessment and our participation in the IAPO's Global Patient Congress. During 2010 we also welcomed the support of four new MEPs including Nessa Childers, António Fernando Correia de Campos, Miroslav Ouzky and Jill Evans.

Additionally, on 1 December, HFE jointly organised with the Belgian Presidency of the EU a European Parliament conference on how best to manage chronic disease care. This provided an opportunity to bring together different stakeholders and engage with the members of the European Parliament in order to influence the conclusions on "Innovative approaches for chronic diseases in public health and healthcare systems" set out by the Belgian Presidency.

Indeed, the Belgian Presidency has done fantastic work securing the issue of chronic diseases firmly on the EU agenda by establishing an ambitious plan for the management and prevention of chronic diseases. The Belgian Presidency has also aimed to take into account what HFE believes should always be at the centre of every health policy- the patient.

The work of the Belgian Presidency on the prevention and management of chronic diseases recently concluded during last EPSCO Council on 7 December when the Council Conclusions were presented.



The Conclusions call for the initiation of a Reflection Process "aiming to identify options to optimise the response to the challenges of chronic diseases and cooperation between Member States". HFE welcomes these actions which support the recommendations introduced at our conference and I am confident that we made an important contribution to the development of these Conclusions. I invite you to read more about the conference further in this newsletter.

I have no doubt that 2011 will be an equally exciting and successful year for HFE. The recently held AGM outlined the priorities for the coming year which will focus on the issues of patient safety, health technology assessment (HTA), eHealth and the Innovation Union.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all HFE friends and supporters Happy Holidays and all the best for the coming year.

With my warmest wishes,

**John Bowis**  
Honorary President  
Health First Europe

**Health First Europe attends European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing stakeholder meeting**

On Friday 26 November, the European Commission invited key health players such as public and private associations, companies, individuals and academia to participate in a multi-stakeholder meeting entitled the "European Innovation Partnership" (EIP). The meeting aimed to seek stakeholder views on how the EU can scale up innovation to meet the challenges of an ageing population. In particular, the Commission was keen on how innovation can be used to increase the average number of healthy life years for European citizens by two. The kick off meeting of the EIP on active and healthy ageing has received the support of three different Commissioners: John Dalli, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Affairs, Neelie Kroes, EU Commissioner for the Digital Agenda and Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, EU Commissioner for Research. This event gave a strong message to stakeholders that the European Commission is committed to innovation.

Later in the day, and following the Council competitiveness meeting, EU Member States gave their support to the pilot European Innovation Partnership on active and healthy ageing. The Council support began the European Commission's open consultation on active and healthy ageing. Health First Europe will be contributing to this online consultation that will run until 28 January 2011.

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



**Health First Europe Annual General Meeting**

On 30 November, Health First Europe held its 6th Annual General Meeting to discuss the working programme for 2011. Proposed activities will focus on the areas of eHealth, patient safety, Health Technology Assessment and the Innovation Union.

eHealth has been a topic of much interest lately and prior to the AGM, the Secretary General of the European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL), Marc Lange, gave the attendees a presentation on the latest development in the field. The informative presentation gave an overview of the landscape of e-Health in Europe and how technology is transforming the health sector.

Another topic on the agenda was how Health First Europe can revamp its external communications and

make use of social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook to effectively echo its activities in the European healthcare community.



**Health First Europe and the Belgian Presidency jointly organised conference on Chronic Disease Management**

Health First Europe organised together with the Belgian Presidency of the European Union a European Parliament conference on 1 December on the topic "Chronic Disease Management: Aim for an Innovative Policy "Cure". It brought together policymakers, industry innovators and patient organisations to discuss how best to manage chronic disease care. Sponsored by European Parliament Members Kathleen Van Brempt (Belgium, S&D) and Miroslav Mikolasik (Slovakia, EPP), panellists focused on the barriers and opportunities for the healthcare industry in terms of chronic disease management and emphasized the need for investment in innovative healthcare solutions in order to, as MEP Mikolaski declared, "Add years to life, and life to years."

Speakers at the conference highlighted the work achieved under the Belgian Presidency with regards to chronic disease management and accentuated the need to ensure the social aspects of any medical policy in terms of patient care. Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, Laurette Onkelinx, reiterated that discussions of health policy must integrate both medical and social perspectives and called upon Member States to work together to identify and share best practices for innovative healthcare policies.

For post conference materials, please click [here](#).



### **EHTEL joint symposium "eHealth in Europe's Regions: Acting for Citizens' Health"**

On 22-23 November, EHTEL together with the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and the European Regional and Local Health Authorities (EUREGHA) organised the 2010 Symposium "eHealth in Europe's Regions: Acting for Citizens' Health", hosted by the Committee of the Regions in Brussels. In attendance were 170 Representatives of 42 Regions from 22 countries which marked the launch of the mutual cooperation for eHealth in Europe's Regions. The aim of the conference was to address the question on what eHealth can do for supporting regional health policies and what regions can do to deploy eHealth services.

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

### **EFN and EPHA European Parliament conference on the EU Workforce for health**

On 27 October 2010, the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) with the support of five key MEPs (UK, Greens/EFA), Marisa Matias (Portugal,

MEPs - Oana Elena Antonescu (Romania, EPP), Jean Lambert (UK, Greens/EFA), Marisa Matias (Portugal, GUE/NGL), Marc Tarabella (Belgium, S&D), and Antonia Parvanova (Bulgaria, ALDE) organised the debate "EU Workforce for Health - Putting a Human Face to EU Policy-making" in the European Parliament.

The conference highlighted the importance of considering the EU Workforce for Health in the EU sphere. The testimonies given by a doctor, two nurses and a patient showed that issues like recruitment and migration policies, working conditions, attractiveness of health professionals, education, and improvements in the recognition of professional qualifications are of real concern.

In the framework of healthcare professionals and patients' mobility, MEPs agreed it is time for a European approach. Furthermore, the MEPs championing for health want better coordination and a legal frame, as well as data collection to map the health workforce, analysing how many and what kind of health professionals will be needed in the future.

To read more about EFN's work, please click [here](#).

## EU Health News

### **The Council discusses the maternity leave draft directive**

In the Q3 newsletter, we reported on the European Parliament adopting its 1st reading position of the draft directive on maternity leave. On 6 December, the ESPCO Council met to discuss the issue for the first time since the Parliament vote, rejecting the Parliament's amendments that increased the minimum maternity leave to 20 weeks, going beyond the Commission's initial proposal of 18 weeks.

Ministers considered cost implications the major obstacle arguing that too little was known about the real financial impact of the draft directive for employers and for the wider economy. Furthermore, the Council emphasized that a directive should set minimum standards while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the diversity of situations in the different Member States.

The views on a compulsory 2-week paid paternity leave, a European Parliament amendment, were highly opposed. While some delegations favoured the inclusion of a paternity clause, others argued that the directive should only involve maternity leave as it

was aimed towards pregnant women and workers who had recently given birth or were breastfeeding.

The minimum maternity leave in the EU is currently 14 weeks and the Belgian Presidency considered that the Commissions' original proposals of 18 weeks would be a more appropriate basis for negotiation. The Belgian Presidency will now pass the torch over to the coming Hungarian and Polish Presidencies who will have to find a middle ground to continue the negotiations.

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

### **EC and OECD publish report on the state of health in Europe**

'Health at a glance: Europe 2010', a report recently published by the European Commission and the OECD shows that over half of the EU population is now overweight or obese. In the last 20 years, the rate of obesity has more than doubled with significant implications for health, healthcare and the wider economy. The report also points out that 1 out of 7

children in the EU are overweight, which inevitably leads to greater risks of severe health problems as an adult such as heart diseases, diabetes, some forms of cancer, arthritis and asthma. An increasingly overweight population poses serious financial strains on the economy as well. According to a recent study made in England, costs related to treating obesity and the overweight could increase by 70% between 2007-2015.

Other key findings of the report show great discrepancies in health and controlling health determinants in the EU Member States. For example, less than 18% of adults smoke in Sweden, whereas the same figure in Greece is over 40%.

There has been a notable decrease in death from heart disease in the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Slovenia and Estonia and this is believed to be related to a reduction in alcohol consumption and smoking. The report also found that more men tend to die of cancer than women in the EU and in particular from lung cancer. In 2008, death rates from lung cancer among men were the highest in central and eastern European countries, where more men tend to smoke.

Positive findings of the report included that the average life expectancy in the EU increased by 6 years from 72 to 78 years and improvements in road security have resulted in over 40% fewer deaths due to transport accidents since 1994.

*To read the full 'Health at a glance: Europe 2010', please click [here](#).*

## **Joint EU procurement in vaccines and anti-viral medication**

Following last years Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic, the EU and the Member States are trying to recover from the difficulties presented by the outbreak.

One of the most apparent difficulties during the influenza crisis was the considerable price differences of vaccines between the EU Member States. Taking note of this, the Council adopted its conclusions on the pandemic in September this year, opening up the possibility of joint purchasing in order to guarantee equitable access and the lowest cost for the Member States.

At the EPSCO Council in December, the ministers exchanged views on the previous conclusions and a majority of the Ministers argued in favour of joint procurement of pandemic vaccines and anti-viral medication. A large majority of delegations agreed that the most suitable form of joint procurement would include framework contracts in which Member States may enter into on a voluntary basis.

A common minimum coverage was also discussed.

Most ministers wished to target minimum coverage in strategic sectors such as healthcare workers, policemen and fire fighters. The definition of a common vaccination strategy was also preferred by most as a precondition for setting up a common minimum coverage rate.

However, it was agreed that outstanding issues, such as the question of product liability and the compatibility of competition rules must be further clarified before any final decision can be made.

*To read more about the influenza pandemic A/H1N1 and the Council's conclusions, please click [here](#).*

## **EU Health Prize for Journalists Winners**

The EU Health prize for Journalists is part of the "Europe for Patients" campaign, highlighting a series of healthcare and patient related policy initiatives of the European Commission bound by a common goal: better healthcare for all in Europe. The winner of the second edition of the Prize, which was recently announced by the Commission, went to Gianluca Ferraris and Ilaria Molinari for their article Stealing Hope, an exposé on "Healing clinics" in Europe.

The second runner-up written by Lucie Hášová Truhelková from the Czech Republic dealt with the issues of organ transplantation, a popular topic this year with 8 contributions dealing with the issue.

Third place went to Danish journalists Kasper Krogh, Morten Crone, Line Holm Nielsen and Jesper Woldenhof for their contribution 'The Great Failure' about a young boy's unnecessary death in the A&E and his parents' subsequent struggle to change the Danish health service.

438 journalists from all 27 Member States took part in the competition.

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

## **The Hungarian Presidency's health priorities**

For the first time ever, Hungary will assume the rotating presidency from Belgium on 1 January 2011 as the last in the Trio Presidency programme with Spain and Belgium.

In regards to health, the Hungarian Presidency's working theme will focus on "patient and professional pathways in Europe". Key priorities in health include the issues of health security, mental health, investing in health care for the future, human resources, eHealth and "action for prevention".

Under the Hungarian Presidency, actions related to health security will entail strengthening H1N1

influenza preparedness and responses as well as childhood vaccinations. In this context, the Hungarian Presidency aims to organise an expert-level conference on possibilities for EU action on childhood vaccination in Budapest.

Council conclusions on Mental Health are expected during the first half of 2011 and the Hungarian presidency will also follow up on the EU health workforce, one of the Belgian Presidency's priority areas.

In addition, a Ministerial conference on e-Health will take place 10-13 May 2011 in Budapest. The event will bring together key stakeholders from Europe's healthcare, from policy makers, to providers, insurances, research facilities, vendors as well as patient associations. It will host the eHealth Government Initiative, a formal body of healthcare state secretaries aimed at aligning national eHealth systems in Europe.

To read more about the Hungarian Presidency, please click [here](#).

## Calendar of upcoming Events

### **26-28/01/11: 2nd International Conference on Risk Assessment** (Brussels)

The Conference aims at providing a Forum for global dialogue on risk assessment principles, methods, criteria, practices and arrangements in the various jurisdictions around the world. It is related to and builds upon the Transatlantic Risk Assessment Dialogue of the European Commission with the US and Canada.

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

### **26-29/01/11: International Conference on Health Informatics** (Rome)

The purpose of the conference is to bring together researchers and practitioners interested in the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) to healthcare and medicine in general and to the specialized support to persons with special needs in particular.

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

### **09-13/03/11: 10th International Conference on Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's** (Barcelona)

The conference will give a unique and comprehensive focus on neurodegenerative diseases beyond a narrow view of one disease only such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's.

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

### **14-17/04/11: European International congress "Healthy and active ageing for all Europeans"** (Bologna)

This Congress will provide a unique opportunity for scientific interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers, practitioners and professionals working with older persons in a vast array of sciences: biological, biomedical, chemical, clinical, engineering, nursing, psychology, social sciences, public health and policy.

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

### **18-20/05/11: International Medical Device Industry Compliance Conference** (London)

Building on the successes of previous meetings in Paris, Rome, and Berlin, the 2011 International Medical Device Industry Compliance Conference will include focused discussion on the most current global compliance issues confronting the medical device and diagnostics industry. The conference was designed by industry leaders to not only educate but also stimulate interactive, best practices discussion on timely global compliance challenges. This meeting brings together medical device industry executives, compliance and legal officers from both small and large medical technology manufacturers from across the globe, as well as outside counsel and consultants to this fast growing, dynamic and global industry.

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

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