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NOTE

from: Presidency
to: Council

Subject: **Information from the Presidency's Conferences on Health**
– Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find in the annex a note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "Any Other Business" at the Council meeting (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs) on 5 and 6 December 2007.

Information on the Portuguese Presidency's main activities in the area of health

The Health Programme of the EU Portuguese Presidency, in keeping with the priorities of the 18-month programme of the Three Presidencies emphasized, in its main initiatives, health promotion, disease prevention, access to care, and innovation. The Portuguese Presidency briefly summarizes the outcome of the work done on these activities over the last six months.

1. Round Table on “Health Strategies in Europe” (Lisbon, 12-13 July)

The Round Table, organised at an early stage of the Portuguese Presidency, aimed at decisively contributing to the formulation of the future EU Health Strategy. This event brought together over 400 participants, experts, researchers, policy-makers, representatives from Member States, the European Commission, the UN SG, the WHO and the Council of Europe.

The Round Table addressed critical questions such as: what sort of framework can guide health strategy development in the EU? How to identify and reach consensus on health priorities for the EU? How to ensure that strategic developments are science-based? How can gender issues and other socio-economic determinants be addressed in order to improve equity and reduce health inequalities?

In parallel to the debate on global issues, specific ones such as gender, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, oral health, and tuberculosis were addressed.

Overall, the Round Table stressed the need to invest in health, to integrate health into the Lisbon Agenda, as a key policy contributing to competitiveness and prosperity, and to mainstream health into other policies. It suggested developing a strategic framework, combining vertical core issues and cross-cutting areas, in order to guide strategic choices. It also recommended establishing a coordination mechanism such as a Health Strategy Committee, with representatives of Member States, to ensure the proper implementation and development of the Strategy. The new Programme of Community action in the field of Public Health (2008-2013) and the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2007-2013) were considered essential instruments for the implementation of the Strategy.

2. Conference on “Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes on Drugs” (Lisbon, 19-20 September)

The main objective of the Conference was to promote the debate and the exchange of experiences on the evaluation of public policies and programmes in the field of drugs. The Conference was a follow-up to the section on the evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2008 and the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-2012.

The Conference brought together over 150 participants, representing 28 countries (22 Member States, as well as Australia, Brazil, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Turkey and Russia), the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction, Europol, the WHO and the UN Office for Drugs and Crime.

The Conference debated evaluation exercises at both UN and EU levels, and their potential to sustain evidence-based decision-making on public policies. It concluded that evaluation in the area of drugs demonstrated a significant development in the past five years and that one should take advantage of the favourable momentum to enhance cooperation at both EU and global level.

Among others, the Conference issued the following recommendations:

- Policy makers, professionals and evaluators need to work together to establish evaluation objectives and to ensure that recommendations are taken into consideration for improving service delivery and policy implementation;
- Evaluation exercises need to make use of reliable methodologies, appropriate to the objectives of the evaluation;
- Evaluation exercises in this area need to take into account the dynamic nature of the drugs phenomena and of society and adopt a forward-looking approach;
- Investment in research and data collection networks should to be proportional to the quality and availability of the information needed for evaluation.

3. European Conference on “Health and Migration in the EU – Better Health for All in an Inclusive Society” (Lisbon, 27-28 September)

The PT Presidency chose "Health and Migration in the EU" as its central health theme. The recognition that the EU needs and will continue to need migrants, for both demographic and economical reasons, led the Presidency to introduce this important and long-overdue theme into the EU health agenda.

The event brought together over 300 participants, policy makers, academics, representatives from Member States, and representatives of national, Community, and international institutions such as the WHO and the Council of Europe. It intended to mobilize Member States, European and international organizations to discuss and put forward proposals for policies and strategies of intervention to promote health, prevent disease and improve migrant access to care.

The organisation of this Conference and the preparatory works fostered the formation of a European Network of Health and Migration focal points in the EU Member States with the support of the Commission. This network will hopefully continue, and will be the engine for carrying out and implementing changes for the improvement of migrant health in the near future.

The conclusions of the Conference pointed out *inter alia* that:

- Health is central to migrants' integration in culturally diverse societies, and to enhancing their potential contribution to the economic growth and development of both host and home countries;
- Migrants face health problems that often arise from social and environmental factors similar to those of the more disadvantaged groups, calling for appropriate responses;
- The EU would benefit from an increased synergy of sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, such as health, migration and development policies following the approach of "Health in All Policies";
- There are shortfalls in available information and gaps in knowledge. Thus, surveillance and research on health issues, focusing on specific mobile populations, need to be conducted;
- Some feasible interventions have been identified and were presented in the Conference as Good Practices; however, more structural changes are needed;
- Migrant women and children, which are among the most vulnerable of the migrant populations, should be considered a priority. Other priorities include health at the workplace and mental health;
- The forthcoming European Health Strategy would benefit from addressing migrant health issues in their comprehensive strategic framework;
- Health and migration are two global phenomena that call for urgent global responses. As both cross national and regional borders, it is time for the EU to assume a leading role in this global challenge.

4. EU National AIDS Coordinators Meeting “Translating principles into action” in the WHO European Region and EU Neighbouring Countries (Lisbon, 12 -13 October)

The PT Presidency organized the first meeting of the National HIV/AIDS Programmes Coordinators. HIV/AIDS is a serious concern of the EU and requires complementary and consistent national strategies, technical solutions and programmes in all Member States and Neighbouring Countries.

One of the main goals of this meeting was to discuss a formal coordination mechanism to facilitate the implementation of political, technical and programmatic principles agreed by the Member States in the field of HIV/AIDS. The establishment of a technical working party of the HIV/AIDS Coordinators that would meet at least every two years was suggested.

This initiative could also facilitate, among others, the promotion of consensus on operational definitions, interpretations and priorities when translating principles, the analysis by national authorities of best practices and technical solutions for tackling the AIDS epidemic.

5. European Meeting on “Health and Health Systems Impact Assessment” (Lisbon, 5-6 November)

The PT Presidency recognized the importance of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Health Systems Impact Assessment (HSIA) as tools to support policy decisions for Health in All Policies. The PT Presidency, in collaboration with the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, organized a meeting with the aim of strengthening the development and implementation of HIA/HSIA in the EU.

Participants included members of the High Level Group on Health Services and Medical Care of the EC, especially of the working group on HIA and HSIA, along with key decision makers, representatives from EU Member States, at central and local levels, the WHO, researchers and other stakeholders.

Bringing together the European and country levels and providing a forum for the debate on integrated impact assessments, the meeting contributed to the reinforcement, among other aspects, of the links between health, economic development and the goals of the Lisbon Agenda; the importance of health systems as a component of HIA; the relevance of addressing migrant health in HIA; and the need for co-operation among networks for HIA/HSIA development and sustainability.

6. Conference on “Pharmaceutical Innovation – a New R&D Strategy in the EU” (Viseu, 19-10 November)

The main goal of the Conference was to promote the discussion on the main issues and challenges currently posed to pharmaceutical innovation, such as its funding and the emerging new technologies, and to identify implementing strategies on the main actions proposed with a view to supporting innovation and increasing competitiveness in the European pharmaceutical sector.

Among the 200 participants, there were representatives of the European Commission (DG Research), the European Medicines Agencies, the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, the WHO and other international organisations, as well as research centres, academia, patients associations, national and international pharmaceutical industry representatives, including Small and Medium Enterprises.

Some of the main conclusions and recommendations of the Conference stress:

- The need to harmonize the concept of innovation in order to recognize real innovation;
- The development of social contracts between the pharmaceutical industry and society to respond to innovation needs;
- The need to recognize the importance of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) in support of R&D and innovation;
- The importance of developing European partnerships in the area of research and development projects and also on their financing;
- The need to effectively disseminate information on all advantages arising from the various initiatives which support innovation at European and national levels;
- The need to develop a more professional approach in the search for funding, namely through training, in view of the fact that financing is currently available, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises;
- The importance of investing in and developing a “critical mass” of specialised human resources, in enterprises, research centres and regulatory agencies;
- The need for the EU to increase its support to the access of essential medicines in developing countries.

7. International Conference on “Patient Safety Research” (Oporto, 24-26 September) *

The aim of this Conference was to promote research on patient safety both at the European and at international level as well as to disseminate results, widen the range of initiatives and put forward evidence-based standards. The event was organised by the UK Faculty of Public Health, University College London and the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety with the sponsorship of the PT Presidency.

The Conference brought together about 400 participants (researchers and policy-makers). A strong research basis is needed to ensure high quality healthcare. As health services become ever more complex with health systems constantly changing, all countries need to address how to protect patients from adverse healthcare events that contribute to the global burden of disease.

More funding and increased collaboration for research into patient safety is urgently needed to improve healthcare quality in Europe. These are among the recommendations that form a ten-point action plan for improving patient safety sent out to health authorities across Europe.

8. 5th National Epidemiology Congress – “An Epidemiological Perspective of Men’s Health” (Lisbon, 14-16 November) *

The development of all public health policies namely on men’s health, needs a solid base that should emerge mainly from epidemiological research. The 5th Congress of the Portuguese Association of Epidemiology aimed at stimulating research on men’s health and promoting the discussion and spread of national and international results of research on this theme.

The topics under discussion in connection with an epidemiological perspective of the health of men, gave particular attention to data sources, morbidity and mortality, determinants and risk factors, sexual and reproductive health and priority diseases in the different phases of the lifecycle.

The conclusions of this meeting point to the need to consider men’s health as a priority issue deserving a special report to be prepared under the auspices of the European Commission. Along these lines, the Congress recommended that the 3rd report on the EU Health Status, coordinated by Italian experts, to be presented during the forthcoming French presidency, should give special consideration to this subject.

* Sponsored event

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9. 2nd International Conference on “Poverty, Food and Health Welfare” (Lisbon, 29-30 November) *

This Conference was organised by the Institute of Preventive Medicine (Faculty of Medicine of Lisbon) under the sponsorship of the PT Presidency. The aim of the event was to bring together some of the leading experts to debate new and forward-looking ideas for policy actions aimed at tackling poverty, in its different dimensions.

The subjects under debate made a link across the Three Presidencies (Germany – Portugal – Slovenia) programmes on health and nutrition. The Conference considered topics such as the integration of human rights in poverty reduction strategies, food security and sustainable development issues, and the commitment of global governance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

10. Presidency EU Coordination in WHO events

The Portuguese Presidency coordinated the positions of the EU Member States at various WHO meetings.

The 2nd Conference of the Parties of the WHO Framework on Tobacco Control took place in Bangkok, 30 June to 6 July. It set an agenda for the forthcoming two years of the Convention and recommended the adoption of guidelines, in order to assist governments in implementing more effective legislation for the protection of citizens from tobacco smoke. It also discussed product regulation and illicit trade.

Concerning the International Health Regulations, the common declarations on behalf of EU on the reservations of the Governments of India, United States of America and Turkey were notified to WHO.

The 2nd meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, convened in Geneva from 5 to 10 November in order to draw up a global action plan to reduce the burden of diseases that disproportionately affect developing countries. Considerable progress was made on the principles of the action plan, as well as on several of its elements.

An intergovernmental meeting on pandemic influenza preparedness: sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits was convened in Geneva by the WHO, on 20-23 November. Another meeting will take place in 2008 to proceed with discussions on these issues.

The Portuguese Presidency succeeded in bringing migrants' health into the global agenda of the WHO for the Executive Board meeting in January 2008. A resolution on this topic is expected to be approved by the Executive Board for presentation to the 61st World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2008. Health and migration was discussed in a side-event at the 60th WHA and during the 57th Regional Committee for Europe in Belgrade.

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