



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 20 November 2009

16048/09

SAN 323

NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council

to: Council

Subject : EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
COUNCIL MEETING ON 30 NOVEMBER AND 1 DECEMBER 2009

Information on the Presidency's Conferences

– *Information from the Presidency*
(Other business item)

Delegations will find annexed an information note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject.

Information on the Presidency's Conferences

"Influenza preparedness and response"

(Jönköping, 2 - 3 July 2009)

"Assessing Drug Effectiveness – Common Opportunities and Challenges for Europe"

(Stockholm, 29 July 2009)

"Conference on Healthy and Dignified Ageing"

(Stockholm, 15 - 16 September 2009)

"Innovative Incentives for Effective Antibacterials"

(Stockholm, 17 September 2009)

"Expert Conference on Alcohol and Health"

(Stockholm, 21 - 22 September 2009)

"High-level meeting on European eHealth Governance"

(Stockholm, 23 October 2009)

"eHealth within the framework of eGovernment"

(Malmö, 19-20 November 2009)

- Information note from the Presidency-

Influenza preparedness and response, 2-3 July, Jönköping

Member States experts met on 2–3 July 2009 to discuss pandemic influenza preparedness. The WHO, the Commission and ECDC as well as three of the first affected countries, UK, Spain and the USA presented experiences from their work on influenza preparedness to date and discussed areas for further cooperation. Parallel workshops were held on present and future vaccine use, school closure and EU coordination.

The impression was that containment strategies; contact tracing and follow-up prophylaxis, treatment and daily reporting of cases confirmed by laboratory testing, demand substantial efforts and resources that will be unsustainable. Moreover, the impression was that Member States had reached, or soon would reach, a point in the development of the pandemic where resources could be used more efficiently. One important area would be to follow the severity of the pandemic following indicators such as mortality and intensive care use.

It was recognized that during the course of the outbreak, pressure on emergency departments is expected to increase and that people will need to be directed to primary care centers so that the emergency department can continue to care for critically ill patients. The general need to coordinate primary and secondary care to deal with the inevitable surge in people seeking and needing care was also highlighted.

One of the conclusions was that due to the different country situations, all countries cannot, need not and should not take the same actions at the same time, or even the same actions at any time and that it is important to foster public understanding of, and acceptance for, the difference prerequisites of different Member States.

The conference also discussed that school closures will occur naturally in pandemics when many pupils are off sick. School closures could even be a possible tool to reduce the height of the first wave and so be included in pandemic preparedness. However, they are by no mean essential and require detailed precise preparation to be as effective as possible and to ensure that they do not create new problems.

Another conclusion was that it is important to find ways at national level to maintain a high level of awareness and preparedness in the healthcare system in spite of the moderate health impact of the pandemic so far. Pandemic plans must be reviewed and adapted during the course of the outbreak. A change of plans should be communicated as a positive sign of flexibility and attentiveness in adapting to the situation. EU coordination has been extensive, the structures in place have been tested and have produced many good results. The structures will continue to be a solid platform for EU coordination but can still be improved. The general impression was also that WHO has showed good and strong leadership during the pandemic.

Finally the expert meeting concluded on next steps concerning containment and mitigation, EU coordination, international cooperation, vaccines and vaccination.

Assessing Drug Effectiveness – Common Opportunities and Challenges for Europe,
29 July, Stockholm

On July 29 2009 the conference “Assessing Drug Effectiveness – Common Opportunities and Challenges for Europe” took place in Stockholm with 120 participants from 27 countries. The Conference was a step towards increased European cooperation on assessment of the effectiveness of medicinal products after approval. The ultimate objective is to provide greater assurance and safety for the individual patient by means of better knowledge based on information generated already when drug treatment is started. As a result of the conference the Swedish Presidency will initiate a pilot project to find ways of cooperating systematically at EU level on the collection and sharing of data on the effectiveness of drugs. A first meeting with interested actors was held on 13 November 2009 in Brussels.

Conference on Healthy and Dignified Ageing, 15-16 September, Stockholm

The fact that we live longer is a great success for the European welfare societies. At the same time the demographic development is a great challenge for the EU Member States. The number as well as the percentage of elderly persons in our societies are constantly growing with implications for pension systems, labour markets and for health and social care.

Ensuring dignified and high-quality care for Europe’s ageing population will be an increasingly important part of society’s tasks. Health and social care for elderly people will require more and more resources, while the demands for quality in elderly care will increase.

The demographic development brings with it a number of challenges, both human and financial.

The conference in Stockholm on 15-16 September provided an opportunity to discuss questions like how we can make health care and social services more efficient without compromising quality and dignity, how we can improve coordination and cooperation between different actors to improve elderly care and how we can use preventive health work to help improve quality of life and delay people becoming ill. Moreover the conference discussed how we can encourage more people to seek work in elderly care, how to ensure that staff have the right skills and how we can use indicators and open comparisons to improve quality and efficiency as well as how we tackle the challenge of increasing numbers of Alzheimer’s cases in the population.

One central issue that was brought up was the need to increase cooperation and coordination between the health sector and the social sector as regards the health and social care of the elderly populations. This can bring major benefits in the form of better quality of life for people and economic savings for society. Invited to the conference were civil servants from both health and social ministries as well as from DG EMPLO and DG SANCO in order to ease cooperation and discussion on these issues.

Taking care of elderly people in a dignified manner requires shifting focus from institutions to the needs of the individual. The perspective of the individual is particularly important for those who are not able to speak for themselves, such as those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. These diseases affect not only the elderly individual but also their family and close friends. This type of disease places special demands on cooperation between different actors and the support given to the formal and informal carers.

The main conclusions from the conference were that we have common challenges and a lot of knowledge available but the challenges won't dissolve by themselves – we need to cooperate and learn from each other.

Innovative Incentives for Effective Antibacterials, 17 September, Stockholm

The expert conference *Innovative Incentives for Effective Antibacterials* was held in Stockholm on 17 September 2009. The aim of the conference was to explore ways of creating incentives for the development of new drugs effective against multidrug resistant pathogens. The conference called on a unique mix of experts representing the EU Commission, governments, EU authorities, academia, the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, NGOs and other organizations as well as regulators of pharmaceutical products. The conference was preceded by three workshop sessions on 16 September, addressing the possibilities of regulatory optimization, financial and legislative options and research strategies to enhance the possibilities of getting new and much needed products to the patients.

At the day of the conference, two reports were made public and presented. The first report by EMEA and ECDC called *The bacterial challenge: Time to react. A call to narrow the gap between multi-drug resistant bacteria in EU and the development of new antibacterial* points at a serious gap between the trends and burden of infections due to multidrug-resistant bacteria in the EU and the current status in research and development pipeline of antibacterial agents. The second report, *Policies and Incentives for Promoting Innovation in Antibiotic Research*, by professor Elias Mossialos at the London School of Economy and Political Science on behalf of the European Observatory for Health Systems and Policies presents possible ways to re-ignite the market for antibiotics through economic and regulatory means.

The presentations and discussions at the conference clearly showed the seriousness of the problem of antibiotic resistance and the need of immediate action.

Expert Conference on Alcohol and Health, 21-22 September, Stockholm

Harmful use of alcohol is a threat to public health, social welfare and economic development across EU Member States. The level of alcohol-related harm is unacceptably high both at national and EU level. Harmful use of alcohol is a significant risk factor for premature mortality in the EU, with approximately 200 000 alcohol-related premature deaths per year. Young people are particularly vulnerable.

This is why the Swedish Presidency is prioritising work to prevent harm caused by harmful use of alcohol. In particular, the Presidency is giving priority to efforts to reduce the impact of alcohol advertising and marketing on young people, to support children in families with alcohol problems, alcohol's impact on the unborn child, the influence of pricing policies on alcohol-related harm and the effects of harmful alcohol use on healthy and dignified ageing. For this reason an Expert Conference on Alcohol and Health was held in Stockholm on 21 and 22 September 2009 to support a sustainable, long-term and comprehensive EU alcohol strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm in the European Union.

The Swedish Presidency coincides with the publication of the first progress report on the implementation of the EU Alcohol Strategy, which was adopted in 2006.

The Alcohol Conference featured over 50 presentations from politicians, professionals, researchers and members of civil society. The progress report on the EU Alcohol Strategy was presented as well as several reports from EU and WHO projects. The Expert Conference aimed to highlight the strategic importance of keeping the alcohol and health issue high on the EU and MS agendas. More than 450 people participated and had the opportunity to take part in more than 30 open seminars, events on a “open scene”, nine official workshops, 23 presentations in plenum and 3 round tables discussions.

The main conclusions and themes emerging from the conference gave strong support to the Swedish Presidency priorities and the need for a comprehensive multi sectoral approach to addressing the problems of alcohol-related harm across the EU, and thus for a long-term EU Alcohol Strategy, also beyond 2012 with is the end date of the current EU Strategy.

High-level meeting on European eHealth Governance, 23 October, Stockholm and eHealth within the framework of eGovernment, 19-20 November, Malmö

A high-level meeting on European eHealth Governance was organized in Stockholm on 23 October as a follow-up to the discussions initiated at the informal meeting of State Secretaries in Prague on 18 February during the Czech Presidency. The main objectives with this meeting was to reach an agreement on how to materialize the ambitions set out in the Council Conclusions on eHealth. The discussions focused on how to develop a suitable Member Stated led mechanism for political leadership, governance and coordination of ongoing activities in the field of eHealth.

The conclusions from the meeting was that there is strong consensus on the need for better inclusion of eHealth in health policies and base eHealth investments on health needs. Furthermore, there was a general agreement on the need for a deeper cooperation on eHealth, based on a strong political governance, if we are to reach broad use and acceptance of eHealth services and support the deployment process. In order to reach this goal, the agreement was to initiate formal negotiations for developing a Member State led mechanism for eHealth Governance, using the instrument of a Joint Action as the format for future cooperation. A Core Group of Member States was appointed to facilitate this process coordinated by the Swedish and incoming Spanish Presidencies.

At the 5th Ministerial Conference on eGovernment, different measures for how to support the mobility of citizens, remove administrative barriers and boost the Single Market by the use of innovative eServices was one of the main discussions. eHealth was presented as one of the key elements in the ambition to provide European citizens with safe and efficient eServices. By using cross-boarder eHealth services, healthcare providers can ensure continuity of care for citizens in need of emergency or planned medical treatment when travelling in another Member State.

It was described how eHealth today is used as a catalyst for healthcare reform and an enabler for increasing patient safety, quality and efficiency in healthcare. Ongoing work at operational level for developing cross-boarder eHealth services through the European large-scale pilot project epSOS – Smart Open Services for European Patients – was mentioned as a good example for how to provide visible added-value for citizens from the work within the field of eGovernment.