

February
2010



EU HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

www.health-inequalities.eu www.eurohealthnet.eu
www.health-gradient.eu www.equitychannel.net

Calendar of events

Feb

20 February: [World Day of Social Justice](#)

23 February: [International Symposium: Tackling Unemployment in the EU through Social Inclusion and Training Programmes](#) (Brussels)

23 February: [Meeting on policies to promote renewable energy in Europe](#) (Madrid)

23 February: [How to realign the EU Sustainable Development Strategy](#) (Brussels)

23-24 February: [4th Annual Nutrition and Lifestyle Conference](#) (Brussels)

24 February: [Half-day conference on the Lisbon Treaty](#) (Brussels)

24 February: [Drug and Alcohol treatment for young people conference 2010](#) (London, UK)

25 February: [Climate change: whose health will be affected?](#) (Dublin, Ireland)

24 - 26 February: [5th WHO Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment - Protecting children's health in a changing environment](#) (Parma, Italy)

25-28 February: [International Conference on Early Disease Detection and Prevention \(EDDP\)](#): (Munich, Germany)

28 Feb: [World Rare Disease Day 2010](#)

Mar

8 March: [International Women's Day](#)

11-12 March: [Special Meeting of the Table of the Regions Committee](#) (Valladolid, Spain)

11 March: [World Kidney Day](#)

9-12 March: [XIVth International Congress for Infectious Diseases](#) (Miami, Florida)

10 - 12 March : [WHO/Europe: Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) (Parma, Italy)

EU News

New European Commission takes office

The new European Commission has been formally approved by a vote in the European Parliament, and begins a new term which will last until 31 October 2014. Former social policy minister for Malta, John Dalli, will be the new Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy.

Along with public health, Dalli's portfolio will also include additional consumer issues and pharmaceutical policy. This shuffle has caused delight from campaigners hoping for a stronger public health approach to pharmaceutical policies, but some concern that the focus of the new European Commission may shift towards industry and consumer interests, taking emphasis from the public health priorities. However, at his hearing in the European Parliament Dalli stressed that he will prioritise prevention of ill health.

We will be reporting more updates in this newsletter about the work agenda of the new commissioners as it becomes clear. In the meantime, you can visit the [new website](#) of John Dalli and get more information on the new European Commission 2010-2014 [here](#).

Inequalities tops Spanish Presidency health agenda

Monitoring the social determinants of health and reducing inequalities is a main health priority of the Spanish Presidency of the EU, according to a new document from the Ministry of Health and Social Policy which sets out its priorities for action at the European level.

Spain wants to build on the momentum of the European Commission's Communication on reducing health inequalities and to create a "consistent and effective international agenda" on the issue. Spain will host an informal meeting of national health ministers in Madrid on 22/23rd April, dedicated to "Innovation in public health: monitoring social determinants of health and reducing inequalities". EuroHealthNet, whose members include the Ministry of Health for Spain, and the Determine Consortium are being involved in preparations for the events.

http://www.msc.es/en/presidenciaUE/doc/presidenciaUE_MSPS_en.pdf

Europeans unhappy with way inequalities addressed

Most people in Europe are unhappy with the way inequalities are dealt with, a new survey has found. Fifteen per cent of citizens feel that current measures to tackle inequalities are "very bad". Furthermore, only 2 per cent of people think that "very good" work is being done in this area. Nearly half of the people questioned said that they felt that policies which aim to improve unfair inequalities have not changed in the last 5 years.

Despite low expectations regarding policies, a majority of people expressed high levels of well-being. Four out of five Europeans say they are happy with the lives they lead. However, there are still differences between countries in terms of individual satisfaction. 98 per cent of Danes who were questioned say they are satisfied with their lives, compared to 51 per cent of respondents in Hungary who are dissatisfied.

The survey forms part of the EU's Social Situation Report and can be downloaded in full [here](#).

Counting the costs of alcohol

A debate in the European Parliament on the "social costs of alcohol", heard that alcohol is a contributory factor in one in 10 deaths in Europe and responsible for 7.4 per cent of all ill-

15 - 18 March : [World of Health IT Conference & Exhibition](#) (Barcelona, Spain)

21 March: [International Day for the Elimination for Racial Discrimination](#)

22-23 March: [5th NGO Forum associated to the EU-LAC Summit](#) (Madrid)

24 March: [World TB Day](#)

25-26 March: [Spring Meeting of the Council of the European University Association](#) (Seville, Spain)

22-26 March : [Week for EU Health Promotion and Health Equity](#) (Brussels)

22-26 March: [EU Sustainable Energy Week 2010](#) (Brussels)

Apr

6 - 7 April : [Health 2.0 Europe](#) (Paris, France)

7-11 April: [World Health Day 2010](#)

8 - 9 April : [6th edition of the French Prevention Days](#) (Paris, France)

8-11 April: [WCPD 2010: 6th World Congress on Prevention of Diabetes and its Complications](#) (Dresden, Germany)

9 - 11 April : [1st Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Global Health](#) (Cuernavaca, Mexico)

14 - 16 April : [18th International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services](#) (Manchester, UK)

18-20 April: [European Local Government Summit](#) (Barcelona, Spain)

19-21 April 2010: [Geneva Health Forum and Global Access to Health Platform](#) (Geneva)

21-22 April: [EC Thematic Conference on Mental Health: Mental health and older people](#) (Brussels)

25 April: [World Malaria Day](#)

27 April: [Oral Health in Europe- promoting education, prevention and better access to dental care](#) (Brussels)

28-30 April: [Regional Congress of Mediterranean Countries: Sustainable Building](#) (Madrid, Spain)

28 April: [World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#)

May

health in the EU.

The EU is the heaviest drinking region in the world with 11 litres of pure alcohol drunk per adult each year, over 2.5 times higher than the rest of the world average. The conference was also told that the WHO is due to introduce in May 2010 a new Global Alcohol Strategy that will aim at reducing harmful use of alcohol. In addition, the 4th European Alcohol Policy conference will take place on 21 – 22 June 2010 in Brussels.

<http://www.eurocare.org/>

Next steps for EU Action Plan on HIV/AIDS

The European Commission's Action Plan on HIV/AIDS will be developed further developed in the form of a template in which actions and gaps should be filled in by the Commission or be left open for other actors respectively in the next 6 months. In late spring a draft document should be ready which Member States and the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum could fill in with concrete actions, a meeting of the European Commission's HIV/AIDS Think Tank was told.

Participants at the meeting highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation of the action plan, the involvement of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and other directorate generals to ensure a coherent EU response to the HIV/AIDS issue.

Full minutes of the meeting are [here](#).

EU Mental health Pact Conference calls for national suicide prevention programmes across Europe

EU Member States needs strategic national and regional suicide prevention programmes, based on best available evidence and interlinked to other public policies, while better routine data collection is needed for depression, suicide and their risk and protective factors. These were some of the main conclusions on a conference on the Prevention of Depression and Suicide held in Budapest, at which EuroHealthNet took part.

Participants also felt that economic crisis has an impact on mental wellbeing, and increases risk of psychological distress, alcohol abuse and suicides, and as such, action against depression and suicide should be integrated into the response to the economic crisis.

Full conference conclusions can be found [here](#).

Up to 40% of cancer cases could be prevented, says WHO

Changes in lifestyle and improved prevention and screening policies could prevent up to 40% of all cancer cases, the WHO Regional Office for Europe said before World Cancer Day on 4 February 2010.

People can significantly reduce their cancer risk by avoiding risk factors (such as tobacco use, heavy alcohol consumption, excessive sun exposure and obesity) and adopting healthier lifestyles. As cancer incidence rates continue to rise, governments have a crucial role in raising awareness and putting in place comprehensive early detection measures.

"Well-conceived, effective national cancer control programmes are essential to fight cancer and to improve the lives of cancer patients," says Zsuzsanna Jakab, the new WHO Regional Director for Europe. "We urge governments to rigorously implement the four basic components of cancer control – prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and palliative care."

http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/WHO/MediaCentre/PR/2010/20100204_1?language=English

EU-funded research uncovers DNA obesity link...

Around 7 in every 1000 morbidly obese people are missing a section of their DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) that contains around 30 genes, say the results of an EU-funded project published in the journal Nature. The authors of the study, from Imperial College

1-2 May: [EU-Lac Meeting of Young Leaders](#) (Malaga, Spain)

4-5 May: [Trade Union Forum associated to the EU-ALC Summit](#) (Madrid, Spain)

5-7 May: [Economic and Social Forum associated with the EU-LAC Summit](#) (Madrid, Spain)

5 - 7 May : [EGEA VI: Social and Health Benefits of Balanced Diet: The role of fruits and Vegetables](#) (Brussels)

13 - 15 May : [5th European Conference on Rare Diseases](#) (Krakow, Poland)

18 May: [EU-LAC Madrid Summit: Towards a new stage in the bi-regional partnership: Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion](#) (Madrid, Spain)

19 - 21 May : [6th European Sustainable Cities & Towns Conference](#) (Dunkerque, France)

20 May : [EU Public health Forum](#) (Brussels)

19 - 23 May : [Congress for the New Urbanism \(CNU\)](#) (Atlanta, USA)

24-26 May: [2nd World Forum Against Drugs](#) (Stockholm, Sweden)

27-29 May: [3rd Conference of Migrant and Ethnic Health Minority in Europe](#) (PCS, Hungary)

26-28 May: [EMSP Annual Congress 2010](#) (Stuttgart, Austria)

31 May: [World No Tobacco Day](#)

More online

For a full list of upcoming events, please visit the [Equity Channel calendar](#).

London (ICL) in the UK and 10 other European research centres, suggest that the missing DNA may have a dramatic effect on the weight of the affected people.

"It is becoming increasingly clear that for some morbidly obese people, their weight gain has an underlying genetic cause. If we can identify these individuals through genetic testing, we can then offer them appropriate support and medical interventions, such as the option of weight loss surgery, to improve their long-term health," said Professor Philippe Froguel from ICL.

For the full article, please see the [CORDIS website here](#).

...and hopes to reveal more about pollution and health

The EU has granted over EUR 24 million in funding to researchers in the Czech Republic to investigate the link between the state of the environment and of the population's health. Masaryk University (MU), the Veterinary Research Institute and the Institute of Scientific Instruments will use the funding to construct a new research centre, expected to open in 2012. One of the questions for the centre to answer is whether the environment is to blame for the exceptionally high incidence of oncological diseases.

Many others serious illnesses could be connected with toxic chemicals in our environment. The new research centre will obtain data concerning environment pollution by toxic matter and add information about the behaviour and effects on the basis of knowledge from laboratory experiments, toxicologic tests and mathematic models.

More information about the work can be found on the EU [Research Information Centre](#).

...while EAHC presents best practices in tackling addiction

On 25 and 26 January 2010 the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers hosted a meeting bringing together representatives of several public health projects funded through the Public Health Programme 2003- 2008 and the Second Health Programme 2008-2013.

All projects which were present at the meeting in Luxembourg focused on prevention of addiction to tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. The main purpose of the workshop was to establish synergies between projects, share methods of assessment of good practices and results. The participants hoped also to orient the future policies of the Member State and the EU in the field of addiction prevention.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/projects/highlights.html>

New European network to tackle impact of climate change on disease

A recent study has examined the evidence for the influence of the climate on infectious disease and proposes a new integrated network for environmental and health data. The infrastructure has been proposed by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to address the multidisciplinary and complex nature of managing the impacts of climate change on disease.

Called the European Environmental and Epidemiology (E3) Network, it is envisaged that the new network will bring together data from a variety of sources and act as a central hub for information, surveillance and technical support.

http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/Pages/Climate_Change.aspx

Towards proper information about prescription drugs

People in Europe should be able to reliable, quality information about prescription drugs and there should be overall authoritative body to supervise online sources of information, a conference in the European Parliament was told.

The conference was hosted by the ALDE group and in the context of the proposed EU directive on information on medicinal products, which is currently being looked at by MEPs.,

Participants discussed how to improve the “readability” of leaflets which come with prescription medicines, which the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) said had to be “made by patients and for patients.”

More information about the conference is on the [ALDE website](#).

National and local news

France: people eat better but concerns remain over variation of diet

More people in France are eating fruit and vegetables on a daily basis, levels of alcohol intake are declining and only 5.4% of the population have snacks in between meals, according to country's *Health and Nutrition Barometer 2008*.

However, the report also reveals that the structure of meals is being simplified, something which is causing some concern about making sure people have a balanced diet containing a variety of nutrients and in which all the food groups are represented.

<http://www.inpes.sante.fr/CFESBases/equilibre/pdf/Lettre57.pdf>

A [conference](#) on the “Social And Health Benefits Of Balanced Diet”, organised by [Aprifel](#), is due to take place in Brussels in May.

England: National Review of health inequalities released

The yearlong review of health inequalities policies in England has been published by Professor Sir Michael Marmot and his team. With six headline recommendations backed by over 100 specific suggestions, the report commissioned by the department of health is now being considered by the Government. EuroHealthNet has been pleased to contribute international information and comments to this process. It is believed that this process may now be replicated on a European scale but no firm details are yet available.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/qheg/marmotreview>

England: government presents action plan on mental health

The Department of Health for England has published a cross-governmental strategy on mental health and well-being with the overall intention to “unlock the benefits of well-being and mental health for the whole population.”

Part of the action plan, known as “New Horizons”, will be the establishment of a New Horizons ministerial advisory group for inequalities and mental health, while the Department of Health will offer support and advice on mental health to government departments and other statutory agencies as they carry out health impact assessments on their policies.

The action plan can be read in full on the Department of Health [website](#).

England: highlighting the benefits of Health Impact Assessment

The North West Health Impact Assessment Capacity Building Programme (NW HIA CBP) is a two-year programme of work (January 2009 - December 2010) that aims to increase capacity for HIA across the North West region.

The programme has produced a report on the baseline assessment of current HIA capacity and capability in the North West of England, which has concluded that at present, “HIA is not routinely or systematically used to inform policy and practice.” The team is now pushing to promote the more obvious benefits of HIA among leaders and managers, and has held a series of workshops on this topic around the North West.

<http://www.nwph.net/nwhia/default.aspx>

Other international news

Latest data on health differences in EU

A new report from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies investigates the latest data on the differences in health status within and between European countries.

The report, "Health in the European Union: trends and analysis", looks at the relationship between living conditions, socioeconomic factors and health, as a way of stimulating the debate about which policies could be most effective in reducing unfair differences in health.

The full report can be read [here](#).

Eurohealth journal special edition on health inequalities

The first edition this year of the journal *Eurohealth* is dedicated to "Measuring and tackling health inequalities across Europe", and includes a European Commission perspective on reducing health inequalities in the EU, a discussion about the challenges with measurement and data availability and examples of national strategic approaches in France, Hungary and the Netherlands.

The journal is available in electronic format [here](#).

Call for EU-wide monitoring of injuries...

EuroSafe, the European Association for Injury prevention and Safety Promotion, has called for a "a full-fledged EU injury data exchange" to enable the sustainable, EU-wide exchange of information on fatal and non-fatal injuries due to accidents or violence.

Eurosafe says that such an injury surveillance system should consist of "in all countries at least one hospital serving as a reference hospital for collecting on routine base more detailed data on external causes and the circumstances of the injury event, as well as the long term consequences." They add that it should be mandatory by 2015 in the framework of the EU Regulation on health statistics.

For more information, please visit the EuroSafe website [here](#).

...and for urgent EU action to reduce salt intake

A new study has shown that reducing dietary salt intake by 3g per day (1200mg less sodium per day) could result in 60,000 to 120,000 fewer cases of heart disease, 32,000 to 66,000 fewer strokes and 54,000 to 100,000 fewer heart attacks.

The findings, from the University of California, San Francisco, USA and published in the New England Journal of Medicine, have prompted the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) to call for urgent EU public health measures to substantially reduce the population's salt intake across Europe. "The reality of international food production in Europe means that such public health initiatives need to be tackled on a European wide basis, rather than an individual country basis," said ESC spokesperson Professor Frank Ruschitzka.

The full press release from the ESC can be accessed [here](#).

Video messages from fundamental rights conference now available

Empowering marginalised communities to participate in policy making, mainstreaming human rights into policy and continuous human rights training for public employees were among the topics covered at the Fundamental Rights Conference (FRC) 2009.

A series of video messages broadcast to the conference can be viewed [here](#).

Drug Prevention Prize 2010 opens for submissions

The Pompidou Group, part of the Council of Europe focusing on combating drug abuse and drug trafficking, has launched its European Drug Prevention Prize 2010. The prize is awarded every two years to three drug prevention projects that fully involve young people, either in the development and implementation of activities, decision-making, project management and/or evaluation.

For the first time, all 47 Council of Europe member States are invited to compete. The Prize will be awarded during the Ministerial Conference of the Pompidou Group in November 2010. The deadline for submission is 31 March 2010.

To apply, please go to the website of the Pompidou Group [here](#).

Using Health Highlights

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Would you like to inform other members about new publications or events in your organisation or country? **Please send contributions to m.williams@eurohealthnet.eu**

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