

August 2010



EU HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

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Calendar of events

18-19 August 2010: [Well-being in the Information Society](#) (Turku, Finland)

22-26 August 2010: [Tri-annual meeting of the International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety](#) (Oslo, Norway)

September

2-5 September 2010: [Dignity for the Frail Old](#) (Bergen, Norway)

9 September 2010: [12th Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco Europe](#) (Bath, UK)

12-13 September 2010: [WCRF Conference: Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer Prevention](#) (London, UK)

13-16 September 2010: [Sixtieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe](#) (Moscow, Russia)

14-17 September 2010: [Active Ageing: Smart Solutions, New Markets](#) (Odense, Denmark)

15 September 2010: [EP hearing the Written Declaration on the fight against Colorectal Cancer](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

16 September 2010: [eHealth Strategies in European Countries](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

20 September 2010: [Working with communities to reduce health inequalities conference](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

20-24 September 2010: [Disease-mongering and public health](#) (Menorca, Spain)

21-24 September 2010: [10th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion](#) (London, UK)

21-24 September 2010: [The Second Global Forum on TB Vaccines](#) (Tallinn, Estonia)

28 September - 11th EHC Round Table of Stakeholders: Patient Safety and Haemophilia Care (Brussels, Belgium)

28 September - 2 October 2010: [International Scientific Conference – Health, Work and Social Responsibility](#) (Rome, Italy)

EU News

10 years for healthier, safer and more confident consumers

Directorate General for Health and Consumers turns 10 years old this autumn. To mark this occasion, a special video has been prepared. While it presents main achievements of the European Union in the areas of public health, food safety and consumer affairs, it also offers both historical perspective and insight in the future from Commissioners Kuneva and Vassiliou, as well as other important actors.

Click [here](#) to watch the video.

Statistics on the number of drug-induced deaths

DG SANCO has uploaded statistics on the number of drug-induced deaths. The data was collected by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and cases were counted "when their underlying cause of death is mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use or poisoning (accidental, intentional or by undetermined intent)." Data for the EU27, Croatia, Turkey and Norway are included from 1995 onwards.

More information about the statistics on the number of drug-induced deaths can be found on the [website](#) of DG SANCO. The EMCDDA [website](#) provides further details on the drug situation in Europe.

Commission addresses key issues in nuclear medicine, radiology and radiotherapy

The Commission has adopted a Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council on medical applications of ionizing radiation. It proposes a way forward to resolve the urgent issue of shortage of supply of radioisotopes for nuclear medicine. The Communication also identifies key issues to improve radiation protection of patients and medical staff, to avoid a rise in population exposure associated with the technological advances in X-ray computed tomography imaging (CT) and an increase of accidental or unintended exposures in radiotherapy. This Communication was jointly proposed by Günther Oettinger, Commissioner responsible for Energy, and by John Dalli, Commissioner responsible for Health and Consumer Policy.

More information can be found [here](#).

New Workplace Health Promotion portal opens

The EU Agency for Health and Safety at work has launched a new web portal on Workplace Health Promotion (WHP), including two new factsheets that provide overview and advice to employers and workers. This ranges from ways to create a supportive working environment to providing information, ideas and encouragement on health matters, such as giving up smoking. The portal also includes good practice resources, useful links and case studies.

Employers have an important role to play in encouraging workers to adopt healthy lifestyles. In addition to the health benefits for workers, every Euro invested in WHP leads to a Return on Investment of between 2,5 – 4,8 Euros due to reduced absenteeism costs.

For more information please visit the [website](#) of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

New data on financial transparency of patient and consumer organisations shows great involvement of (pharmaceutical) industry

30 September 2010: [In-depth review seminar – child poverty](#)

30 September 2010: [Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the UK](#) (Lodnon, UK)

October

6-9 October 2010: [13th European Health Forum](#) (Gastein, Austria)

14-15 October 2010: [Hepatitis B and C Summit Conference](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

19 October 2010: [Chronic Respiratory Diseases – Exploring Solutions in the EU](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

21-22 October 2010: Environmental health and social vulnerabilities (Namur, Belgium)

November

4-5 November 2010: [Social Platform's annual conference on Care](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

8-9 November 2010: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities from a Regional Perspective (Ghent, Belgium)

8-9 November 2010: [Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Stigma for better Mental Health and Well-being](#) (Lisbon Portugal)

8-10 November 2010: [2nd European Conference on Environment and Health](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

11-12 November 2010: [Careum Congress](#) (Zurich, Switzerland)

10-13 November 2010: [European Public Health Conference](#) (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

15-16 November 2010: [Symposium on implementation research in public health](#) (Stockholm, Sweden)

17-20 November: [ECOG 2010 and beyond: Tackling childhood obesity off the menu](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

18-19 November 2010: [Combating poverty and social exclusion – The role of the European Social Fund](#) (Brussels, Belgium)

29-30 November 2010: [Medicine 2.0'10](#) (Maastricht, the Netherlands)

December

1-5 December 2010: [Thirteenth Berlin Roundtables on Transnationality](#) (Berlin, Germany)

More online

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

Health Action International (HAI) has published a research article based on a survey on levels of financial disclosure and transparency among patient and consumer organisations at the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

Key findings of the study show that two-thirds of the patient and consumer organisations working with the EMA received partial or significant funding from pharmaceutical manufacturers and/or industry associations. This baseline data suggests that the pharmaceutical industry is the most prevalent sponsor of the patient voice at the EMA.

Secondly, fewer than half of the 23 organisations complied with EMA financial reporting guidelines, which allegedly suggests the failure of the EMA to effectively monitor and enforce its own guidelines on financial transparency.

Please click here to read the [Research Article](#) and [Factsheet](#), or visit the [website](#) of HAI for more information.

Hearing in Parliament on the fight against Colorectal Cancer in Europe

On the 15th of September, a hearing on the Written Declaration on the fight against Colorectal Cancer will be held in the European Parliament. It is jointly organised by MEP Pavel Poc (Socialists & Democrats) and the United European Gastroenterology Federation (UEGF). The purpose of the hearing is to raise awareness on the battle against Colorectal Cancer (CRC) in Europe. With 200,000 patients dying annually, CRC is the second most common cause of cancer related deaths.

At the hearing, the Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, UEGF representatives, as well as other stakeholders will elaborate on how best to fight Colorectal Cancer across Europe. The hearing will initiate further activities to raise awareness of the importance of prevention and early detection of Colorectal Cancer in Europe that shall finally lead to a Written Declaration adopted by the European Parliament.

Please find the agenda for this event, which includes a list of speakers, on UEGF's [website](#).

Managing the health effects of climate change

Climate change is one of the biggest global health threats of the 21st century. Effects of climate change on health will affect most populations in the next decades and put the lives and wellbeing of billions of people at increased risk.

In their latest report, Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission have outlined the major threats—both direct and indirect—to global health from climate change through changing patterns of disease, water and food insecurity, vulnerable shelter and human settlements, extreme climatic events, and population growth and migration. Although vector-borne diseases will expand their reach and death tolls, especially among elderly people, will increase because of heat waves, the indirect effects of climate change on water, food security, and extreme climatic events are likely to have the biggest effect on global health.

To full report is available [here](#).

Scientists find 95 genetic variants associated with risk factors for heart disease

An international team of scientists has identified 95 genetic variants associated with high blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels which are major risk factors for coronary heart disease. The study, published in the journal Nature and funded in part by the EU, could lead to novel ways of preventing and treating heart disease. Coronary heart disease is a leading cause of death worldwide.

In their paper, the scientists describe how they carried out a genome-wide association study (GWAS), scanning the genomes of 100,000 people of European descent. The researchers' analyses uncovered 95 genetic variants, 59 of which were previously unknown. The scientists also scanned the genomes of thousands of people of East Asian, south Asian and African American descent. This revealed that the majority of the variants are shared across diverse ethnic groups.

To read the full article, please visit the [website](#) of Nature. Or visit the CORDIS [website](#) for more information.

Commission appoints members of EU Committee of Experts on Rare Diseases

New Publications

[DG SANCO] - Feasibility study on funding arrangements for the voluntary and not for profit public health activities at EU level

Available [here](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission] - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities: What does it mean for you?

Available [here](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission] - Equally Professional: Like minds on different journeys

Available [here](#)

[European Agency for Safety and Health at Work] -Mainstreaming Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) into business management

Available [here](#)

[WHO] – Social Determinants of Sexual and Reproductive Health

Available [here](#)

[WHO Europe] - The European Commission's Communication on alcohol, and the WHO framework for alcohol policy – Analysis to guide development of national alcohol action plans

Available [here](#)

[WHO Europe] - Policy Brief: How can the impact of health technology assessments be enhanced?

Available [here](#)

[NICE] - Health Systems and Health Related Behaviour Change: A Critical Review of Primary and Secondary Evidence

Available [here](#)

[University College London] - The contribution of smoking and obesity to income-related inequalities in health in England

Available [here](#)

[Kassel University, Germany] - Equity in Access to Health Promotion, Treatment and Care for all European Women

Available [here](#)

The European Commission has appointed 46 experts as members of the EU Committee on Rare Diseases. The full list of experts can be found [here](#).

Mental Health and Well-being in Older People Thematic Conference - Presentations now available

The conference report, and conclusions and presentations made during the Mental Health and Well-being in Older people event held in Madrid in June 2010 are now available and can be downloaded [here](#).

Open Health Forum 2010 Conference – Documents now available

The documents of the Open Health Forum 2010 (which include the workshop abstracts, workshop programmes, workshop recommendations, and the conference final resolution), the opening speech of Commissioner Dalli, the presentations and outcomes from conference workshops, and the conference video files are now available online [here](#). The Open Health Forum was held 29-30 June in Brussels.

Innovation in Healthcare: From Research to Market. SMEs in Focus – Conference report now available

The report on the outcomes of the conference: "Innovation in Healthcare: From Research to market. SMEs in Focus", which was held 20-21 May 2010 in Brussels, is now available [here](#). The report summarizes the key points discussed, issues raised and challenges highlighted. In particular it focuses on the recommendations of the expert panels and on solutions proposed.

Other international news

Health Assets in a Global Context - Theory, Methods, Action

A new publication by Antony Morgan, Maggie Davies and Erio Ziglio, shows how an asset based approach can assess multiple levels of health-promoting aspects in populations, and promote joint solutions between communities and outside agencies.

The overarching aim of the book is to stimulate researchers, policy makers and practitioners to think differently about how they approach their goal of improving the health of populations and particularly to minimise the risks of exacerbating or widening health inequities. It brings together the work of a number of well known authors, provides rationales and methodologies, and gives concrete examples of asset-based initiatives in use across the world on the individual and community levels.

The book is available online [here](#).

Public health leaders push ambitious agenda to stop TB deaths among people living with HIV

At the 2010 International AIDS Conference in Vienna, global public health leaders committed to an ambitious new agenda to stop Tuberculosis (TB) deaths among people living with HIV. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Stop TB Partnership. The agreement binds the two organizations together in a common goal: to strive towards halving the number of people living with HIV who die from TB by 2015, compared to 2004 levels. Provision of life-saving antiretroviral treatment for all TB patients living with HIV is another key objective.

Stop TB and UNAIDS will press government health programmes to reach all people in need of care for TB/HIV by integrating the services that provide diagnosis and treatment for both conditions; and also seek to increase the resources needed to accomplish this goal. Another overarching objective is to galvanize civil society organizations, communities affected by TB and HIV and the private sector to form strong partnerships aimed at jointly addressing TB/HIV. During 2010 and 2011 the leadership of Stop TB and UNAIDS will make at least four joint visits to countries heavily affected by TB/HIV.

More information on the conference and the partnership is available on the UNAIDS [website](#).

WHO and IOC sign agreement to improve healthy lifestyles

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) are teaming up to promote healthy lifestyle choices, including physical activity, sports for all, Tobacco Free Olympic Games, and the prevention of childhood obesity. As outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed in Lausanne, the WHO and the IOC will work at both the international and country level to promote activities and policy choices to help people reduce their risk of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancers, and diabetes.

The organizations agreed to establish a follow-up group that will meet at least annually to further define, develop and maintain a programme of international cooperation and implement activities of common interest.

For more information please contact [Fadéla Chaib](#), WHO Communications Officer.

WHO, WIPO, WTO join forces to address access to medicines

A symposium held by the WHO, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Trade Organization (WTO) kicked off a closer, factual look at a range of issues affecting how poorer populations can obtain the medicines they need. The three organizations feel they are now well placed to continue to work together closely to harvest information about access to medicines and to support well-informed policymaking on this pressing question.

The heads of the three organizations underscored their determination to continue to join forces to bolster the information available and their cooperation, in order to pursue shared policy goals on public health, intellectual property and trade. Strategies for procuring reliable and affordable supplies of medicines are important in determining how easy or difficult it is for patients in poorer countries to receive the treatments they need. The symposium's emphasis was on data and real-life experiences as a means of understanding the situation.

More information about the symposium is available on the WTO [website](#).

WHO announces new approaches to HIV prevention and treatment among children

The WHO have reported that efforts worldwide on access to treatment for children with HIV have reached a new milestone, with 355 000 children receiving life-saving HIV treatment at the end of 2009, compared to 276 000 at the end of 2008. However, many more lives could be saved if more infants started on medication earlier according to new recommendations from the WHO.

The WHO recommends that all women with HIV should receive antiretroviral drugs to protect against HIV transmission during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding, as there is good evidence that earlier and more effective treatment can prevent nearly all mother-to-child transmissions. The recommendations on infants dovetail with the WHO's new recommendations for women with HIV, which advise earlier treatment for all eligible women, including pregnant mothers.

More information about the new recommendations can be found on the WHO [website](#).

New E-Learning course on Health and Human Rights by PAHO/WHO

The Pan American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation (PAHO/WHO) has developed a new course establishing the links between health and human rights. The course is divided in 3 modules: (1) Relationships between health and human rights in the context of PAHO and WHO strategies; (2) The right to health and other related human rights and fundamental freedoms; and (3) The human rights based approach as a transformative strategy of health systems.

This course is an essential capacity building tool for public health personnel and other governmental officials, Ombudspersons, judges, legislators, human rights organizations, civil society organizations, universities, journalists, organizations of consumers and all stakeholders who are working on the promotion and protection of health.

To access the course, please click [here](#).

National and local news

Germany to focus its R&D efforts on health

The German government has decided to focus its Research & Development (R&D) efforts in 2011 on

the topic "Research for health", as the healthcare system is facing ever more considerable challenges. In 2010 the government already provided €1.2 bn for research in the area of health and this amount is expected to rise in 2011.

The key challenge for 2011 will be to speed up the transposition of basic research into clinical applications, as, according to the German Minister of Research, real R&D success is determined by how many real-life applications it yields. To tackle this challenge the landscape of the German research structure will be changed. Separate centres of health research will be created for six main diseases, in which excellence and specialists' research efforts can be bundled.

Study highlights lifestyle factors that could reduce risk of dementia

Researchers in the UK and France are recommending that reducing depression and diabetes, increasing education and eating more fruit and vegetables may reduce the number of people developing dementia. Reducing heart disease and stroke was also identified as important.

The study analysed the lifestyle and health of 1,433 people over 65 living in the south of France over seven years. It concluded that effectively reducing depression and diabetes would outweigh the effect of removing the principal known genetic risk factor for late onset dementia, if that was possible.

The article, published in the British Medical Journal, can be found [here](#).

NICE calls on food industry to produce healthier food to prevent cardiovascular disease

NICE, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in England has produced a guidance report which highlights that tens of thousands of lives could be saved, and millions of people spared the suffering of living with the effects of heart disease and stroke, simply by producing healthier food. It calls for the food industry to further reduce the salt and saturated fats in the food it produces, building on the good work already started.

In addition to supporting the use of the Food Standard Agency's front-of-pack traffic light food labelling system, the NICE guidance also recommends that local authorities should use planning applications and bye-laws to control fast food outlets – for example limiting the concentration of those based within walking distance of schools, and within local communities.

The NICE guidance, 'Prevention of cardiovascular disease at population level', is available [here](#).

The Netherlands: an SMS as a reminder to take your medication

NIVEL, the Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research, has conducted a study which shows that patients who receive an SMS as a reminder to take their medicines, indeed take 16% more often their medication and have more regular intake patterns. Patients who were included in the study received a medication box that registered when it was opened. If the box did not open within the agreed time, the patient received an SMS with a reminder message.

On average 40-70% of the patients take the medicines that are prescribed to them. While a more loyal medication intake would lead to fewer complications, fewer hospitalizations and lower health care costs, attempts to improve the intake of medicines by patients have failed in the past decades. This new approach might offer new possibilities for the future.

More information can be found on the [website](#) of NIVEL (only available in Dutch).

UK government invites food industry to fund anti-obesity campaign

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has announced that firms such as Mars, Cadbury and Coca-Cola will take on a bigger role in public health by funding campaigns aimed at tackling obesity. In exchange for this new partnership, food and drink firms will not face new legislation outlawing excessively fatty, sugary and salty food.

Lansley plans to withdraw government funding for the Change4Life public health campaign, and replace it by investment from business and charitable organisations. This campaign, launched to tackle the growing obesity problem among children and families in England, kicked off in January 2009 and has cost over £50m (€60m) so far.

For further information, please click [here](#). More information about the Change4Life campaign is available [here](#).

NCIP publishes report on Mental Health and Social Inclusion

A report has been published online, which sets out the work of the National Social Inclusion Programme (NSIP) at the National Institute for Mental Health in England, from the inception of the programme in 2004 to date, and addresses new and future challenges.

The report focuses on seven key areas: Community Engagement, Employment, Education and Skills, Housing, Arts and Culture, Leadership and Workforce, and Socially Inclusive Practice: The capable workforce and transferability of our work.

The report is available on the [website](#) of DG SANCO.

UK: Health gap 'wider than during Great Depression'

The health inequality gap in Britain is greater than it was during the post-World War I slump and the Great Depression, a study suggests. Despite the continued rise in life expectancy, it is well documented that the gap between the richest and poorest has actually been widening in recent years.

Researchers from Sheffield and Bristol looked at early death rates since 1921. They found the current gap was greater than it was in the 1920s and 1930s, the British Medical Journal reports.

To access the full report, click [here](#).

The Netherlands: Factsheet on health of older people

The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) has produced a factsheet on the health of elderly in the Netherlands. It shows that the number of people older than 65 years will increase from 2.5 million in 2009 to 3.4 million in 2020.

Nowadays visual impairment and Coronary Heart Diseases (CHD) are the most common diseases among elderly and arthritis and diabetes mellitus are relatively common as well. Prevention strategies among elderly mainly focus on behavioural change, physical health and general health, and themes often addressed are healthy nutrition, fall prevention, depression, loneliness and bedsores.

The factsheet can be found [here](#) (available only in Dutch).

Approaches to minimum price for alcohol across the UK

Greater Manchester could be the first place in the UK to set a minimum price for alcohol, as the leaders of the councils there are currently working on a by-law which would make it illegal to sell alcohol for less than 50p per unit.

Additionally, during a cross-party meeting addressing ways of tackling Scotland's unhealthy relationship with alcohol, a minimum price for alcohol was discussed and will be confirmed before the next stage of the Alcohol (Scotland) Bill. The Scottish Government favours minimum pricing as the most effective way of tackling the cost of alcohol misuse. On average, Scotland sees 115 hospital admissions every day related to alcohol misuse, and Scotland buys on average 24% more alcohol than the rest of Britain.

First health 2.0 event in the Netherlands

The first European conference on web 2.0 applications in health and medicine will take place at the Maastricht Exhibition and Congress Centre from 29-30 November 2010. Hosted by the University of Twente, the Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) the conference will aim to look "beyond the health 2.0 hype" to try to identify the evidence on what works and what doesn't.

The event is aimed at academics, software and web 2.0 applications developers, consultants, suppliers, business leaders, chief information officers and end users such as health professionals. Conference streams include health 2.0 research methodology, 2.0 tools, business models, country reports and consumer empowerment.

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

UK: Changes to the Food Standards Agency

The Government has announced its intention to retain the Food Standards Agency (FSA) with a

renewed focus on food safety. The Department of Health will become responsible for nutrition policy in England, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will become responsible for country of origin labeling and various other types of food labelling not related to food safety, and food composition policies in England.

More information can be found on the Food Standards Agency [website](#).

Using Health Highlights

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