

March 2011



EU HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

www.health-inequalities.eu www.eurohealthnet.eu
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Calendar of events

March

15 March 2011: [At the Heart of Innovation: e-Health under Scrutiny](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

16-17 March 2011: [Social Innovation Europe – Official Launch](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

17 March 2011: [Healthcare in Europe: Transforming policy, systems and funding](#)
(Geneva, Switzerland)

17 March 2011: [Health Care Reforms In An Ageing European Society With A Focus On The Netherlands](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

17 March 2011: [What Is Not On The Bottle? Alcohol Labeling Policies To Protect Young People](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

17 March 2011: [Stakeholder Conference on the Low Carbon Economy](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

18 March 2011: [Reconciling work and welfare in Europe: Research findings and policy challenges](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

20-30 March 2011: [Week without Pesticides](#)
(Involved countries - Belgium, France, Hungary, The Netherlands, UK)

21 March 2011: [The role of family policy in demographic change - Sharing best practice among Member States](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

22 March 2011: [Global Health Policy Forum](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

23-24 March 2011: [E-Health - A New Holistic Healthcare Plan for Europe](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

24 March 2011: [World Tuberculosis Day: What's up with the research?](#)
(Paris, France)

24 March 2011: [A vision for a healthier nation](#)
(London, UK)

24-26 March 2011: [6th International Symposium on Diabetes and Pregnancy](#)
(Geneva, Switzerland)

Would you like to promote events or new publications of your organisation in health highlights? [Please send us your contributions!](#)

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Main News Stories

The European Commission launches a consultation – How to protect EU citizens more effectively against serious cross-border health threats

The European Commission launched a consultation to gather stakeholders' views on possible actions that can protect EU citizens more effectively against serious cross-border health threats. The aim is to find the response to infectious diseases and other serious cross-border health threats, such as chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and environmental events, be strengthened at EU level. The consultation includes questions on preparedness planning, risk assessment, management of health threats and on how to better communicate with citizens and professional groups. The Commission's initiative on health security in the EU comes at the request of the European Council, following its conclusions of 13 September 2010, on lessons learned from the A/H1N1 Pandemic and Health Security in the EU.

All interested parties are invited to submit their comments by 29 April 2011.

The consultation paper and online questionnaire are available [here](#).
Further information on Health Security in the EU can be found [here](#).

The Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) launches a call for application "Health-2011"

A call for applications "Health — 2011" has been launched within the framework of the Second Programme of Community action in the field of Health (2008-2013). 2011 Work Plan of the Health Programme sets the annual priorities for implementation of EU Health Programme. Based on this decision, the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) launched the calls for proposals for joint actions, operating grants, projects and conferences. The 2011 Work Plan gives more emphasis and resources to a focused cooperation with the Member States. The amount of 17.040.000 euro will be dedicated to the funding of five joint actions.

The deadline for submissions of the proposals under each call is 27 May 2011.

For further details, click [here](#).
All details about funding of joint actions, operating grants, projects and conferences can be found [here](#).
For further details about the EU Health Programme, click [here](#).

The European Parliament calls for the reduction of health inequalities in the EU

28 March 2011: [Dementia Conference](#)
(London, UK)

28-30 March 2011: [III International Congress Long Term Care and Quality of Life](#)
(Madrid, Spain)

29-30 March 2011: [4th annual nanotechnology Safety for Success Dialogue Workshop](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

30-31 March 2011: [Innovation in healthcare – From research to market](#)
(Brussels, 30-31 March 2011)

April

1-2 April 2011: [11th Spring Meeting on Cardiovascular Nursing](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

5-8 April 2011: [International Forum on Quality & Safety in Healthcare](#)
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

7-8 April 2011: [Kick-Off meeting of the EU Joint Action on Health Inequalities \(Equity Action\)](#)
(Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

6-8 April 2011: [The International e-Health Telemedicine and Health ICT Forum](#)
(Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

12-13 April 2011: [Children's health and the environment](#)
(Paris, France)

13 April 2011: [Tackling Under-Age Drinking in Europe - Towards a comprehensive EU-Wide partnership](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

13-14 April 2011: [World Health Care Congress](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

14 April 2011: [Workshop "Active Ageing and Empowerment of Migrant Elders"](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

14 April 2011: [Europe 2020: delivering a healthy and sustainable future for all?](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

14 April 2011: [EU-US cooperation on eHealth: ongoing and planned action](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

14-15 April 2011: [International HIA 2011 Conference In crisis time, healthier ways](#)
(Granada, Spain)

14-17 April 2011: [VII European International Congress](#)
(Bologna, Italy)

19-20 April 2011: [High Level Conference on New Challenges in the European Disability Strategy 2010](#)
(Budapest, Hungary)

The European Parliament adopted a resolution where it says that everybody should have access to healthcare systems and affordable healthcare. The specific needs of vulnerable groups such as women, older patients, undocumented migrants, ethnic minorities, need to be taken better into account. Life expectancy has been shown to vary across EU Member States by 14.2 years for men and 8.3 years for women, says the resolution. Also within countries, groups of different education levels and social situations have widely differing health prospects. The resolution adopted by the European Parliament is non-binding.

The resolution of the EP is available [here](#).

- For EuroHealthNet, the adoption of this report was vital and marked a renewed commitment from the European Parliament to address health inequalities in the EU. EuroHealthNet reiterated that the health of EU citizens is determined by the conditions in which they are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances, which are shaped by policy choices, are mostly responsible for health inequalities – the unfair and avoidable differences in health status between and within countries. Health inequalities persist across the EU, within and between Member States, and there is evidence that they are widening.

The position of EuroHealthNet is available [here](#).

The European Parliament highlights gender equity

The European Parliament adopted two resolutions on “Equality between women and men in the European Union – 2010” and on “The face of female poverty in the European Union”.

The need to narrow the gender pay gap, to get more women in decision-making positions and to raise the female employment rate are among key points in the resolution accompanying the 2010 annual report on equality between women and men in the EU. The importance of better child care facilities and child-related leave is also highlighted. If women’s employment, part-time employment and productivity rates were similar to men’s, GDP would increase by 30%, says the resolution. Only 3% of major companies are chaired by a woman. Member States should therefore take effective measures, such as quotas, to ensure greater representation for women in major listed companies and on the management boards of companies in general. The resolution on “Equality between women and men in the European Union – 2010” is available [here](#).

In its second resolution “The face of female poverty in the European Union”, the European Parliament highlighted that nearly 85 million people in the EU were living below the poverty line in 2008, and 17% of all women in the EU were living in poverty. Macroeconomic, social and labour-market policies should be reformed, to guarantee a minimum income as well as economic and social justice for women. All EU common policies should have a gender perspective adopted by a show of hands.

The resolution on “Equality The face of female poverty in the European Union” is available [here](#).

The resolutions adopted by the European Parliament are non-binding. The European Commission said that the flagship initiative, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, includes proposals for practical measures to achieve the numerical poverty reduction target. Women make up an important component of that category. In 2012 the Commission will present a communication assessing in depth the implementation of active inclusion strategies at national level.

- EuroHealthNet also stressed the existing average life expectancy gap between and within Member States and the need to address the underlying social factors of gender and health inequalities. Some of the differences in health status and survival between men and women are unjust and avoidable. While women generally live longer than men, they are more likely to perceive their health as bad or very bad and often suffer from “invisible” illness and disabilities. A just social distribution of responsibilities, power and rewards between men and women would ensure fairer health outcomes.

The position of EuroHealthNet is available [here](#).

Rural poverty and health systems in the WHO European Region

18-20 April 2011: [Geneva Health Forum](#)
(Geneva, Switzerland)

21-29 April 2011: [World congress on public health - Towards Global Health Equity: Opportunities and Threats](#)
(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

29 April 2011: [Conference on health and technology](#)
(Guarda, Portugal)

May

10-12 May 2011: [E-health Week 2011](#)
(Budapest, Hungary)

12 May 2011: [Innovation in Healthcare - Improving Care, Driving Efficiency](#)
(London, UK)

12-13 May 2011: [Smart Mobility for better cities](#)
(La Rochelle, France)

26 May 2011: [European Flu Summit](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

June

9-10 June 2011 - [FP7 Health: Open Information Day & Brokerage event](#)
(Brussels, Belgium)

30 June 2011: [Mainstreaming Health Promotion: Promoting Health Across Sectors](#)
(Galway, Ireland)

July

25-27 July 2011 - [Environmental Health Risk](#)
(Riga, Latvia)

September

8-9 September 2011 - [Public Health Conference 2011](#)
(London, UK)

26-27 September 2011: [Assets for health and wellbeing across life course: International Conference 2011](#)
(London, UK)

November

23-25 November 2011: [ECDC Annual meeting on antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infections](#)
(Warsaw, Poland)

More online

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

New Publications

EU-WHO - Rural poverty and health systems in the WHO European Region

WHO published a report on "Rural poverty and health systems" where the organization studies the consequences of the financial crisis and economic downturn on rural poverty. The intersections between social determinants of health (education, employment, social protection) in disadvantaged areas are also observed. The rural dimension is often neglected in analyses of health status and health system performance. Data on differences between rural and urban areas on these topics are typically scarce, lacking a comprehensive view of all health system functions, public health governance, and a full spectrum of health issues. In the health sector and beyond, limited data and analysis of the situation of rural populations, and in particular of the rural poor, contribute to their invisibility and neglect in policy processes in many countries.

The report is available [here](#).

- EuroHealthNet is particularly keen in contributing to the vitality of rural areas and territorial diversity throughout the EU. In the frame of its response to "The reform of the CAP towards 2020 - Impact Assessment", EuroHealthNet underlined that rural development funding should focus on new challenges, agro – ecological innovation and on social and economic development including improved access to health care services in rural regions, especially weaker rural regions. This should include support for regional and local food systems as a strategy for inclusive growth. In addition, a strengthened approach to strategic targeting should be developed and policy coherence with EU goals relating to public health, regional development and inclusive growth should be ensured.

EuroHealthNet's response to the "The reform of the CAP towards 2020 - Impact Assessment" is available [here](#).

EU News

Council

The Directive on cross-border healthcare will be applicable in all Member States by September 2013

The Council approved the European Parliament's amendments on the draft directive aimed at facilitating access to safe and high-quality cross-border healthcare and promoting cooperation on healthcare between Member States. This was the last step to the definitive adoption of the directive. Member States have now 30 months to transpose the directive's provision into national legislation.

For access the conclusions of the Council, click [here](#).

Contribution to the next European Council on employment and social aspects

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council held a policy debate covering both employment and social aspects regarding its contribution to the next European Council of 24-25 March 2011. The conclusions of the Council are available [here](#). In that context:

- **The Council adopted conclusions on the European platform against poverty:**
For the Employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs council, it is key to take action to prevent and alleviate poverty and social exclusion and meet the EU headline target for promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty. This requires a combination of all relevant efforts and instruments at EU and national levels. The future development of the EU coordination for social protection and social inclusion will need to continue on key thematic issues that have emerged from the experience of the social open method of coordination in the social inclusion, pensions and health and long-term care strands.

Available [here](#)

EU-WHO - The impact of health and health behaviours on educational outcomes in high-income countries: a review of the evidence

Available [here](#)

Commission on Health Research for Development - Overcoming gaps to advance global health equity: a symposium on new directions for research

Available [here](#)

PubMed Central Canada - From causes to solutions - insights from lay knowledge about health inequalities

Available [here](#)

An International Society and Journal for Equity in Health: 10 years on

Available [here](#)

HealthFirstEurope - E-Quality in E-Health

Available [here](#)

Centers for Disease Controls and prevention - Disparities & Inequalities Report

Available [here](#)

Päijät-Häme Region, Finland - Strategy of Health related sport 2009-2020

Available [here](#)

European Policy Centre (EPC) - Active and healthy ageing - can the EU deliver?

Available [here](#)

European Policy Centre (EPC) - What next for EU Cohesion Policy? Going 'beyond GDP' to deliver greater well-being

Available [here](#)

Environmental Health - Knowns and unknowns on burden of disease due to chemicals: a systematic review

Available [here](#)

NICE - New guidance to tackle alcohol problems

Available [here](#)

New Economics Foundation: Measuring our Progress - The power of well-being

Available [here](#)

The conclusions of the Council on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion are available [here](#).

- **The Council adopted the main messages on Social dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy:**

The Council adopted the main messages of the [report](#) on the social dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy drafted by the SPC. The SPC president pointed out that the Committee finalised its first report on the monitoring of the social situation and the development of social protection policies, including an assessment of the social dimension of Europe 2020 Strategy. This report concentrates on:

- progress towards the EU headline target on social inclusion/poverty reduction, and its interaction with other targets;
- monitoring of the implementation of the social aspects of the Integrated Guidelines, focusing in particular on "Guideline 10: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty";
- priority themes under the Social Open Method of Coordination.

- **The Council adopted the new European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011 - 2020:**

As requested by the European Council in Spring 2003, the Commission has submitted its annual report on equality between women and men. The report describes recent developments in the field of gender equality in the EU and presents statistics on all areas covered, as well as recent developments in the member states. It sets out the state of play in the five priority areas defined in the Commission's strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, namely:

- equal economic independence;
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and
- gender equality outside the Union.

The report will also be the basis of the discussions at the forthcoming high level gender dialogue announced by the Commission in its new Equality Strategy.

Click [here](#) to access the full conclusions.

Click [here](#) for more information on the new European pact for equality between women and men.

- **Exchange of views on the outcome of the consultation on the Green Paper "Towards adequate sustainable and safe European pension systems":**

The Commission informed the Council about the outcome of the consultation on the Green Paper and on possible directions for measures to be taken, which could be reflected in the White Paper to be presented by the end of the year.

According ministers, the aim should be to achieve the right balance between work and retirement and facilitating a longer working life. There will be a need for ensuring adequate incomes in retirement as a safety net against old-age poverty. While a higher effective retirement age is widely recognised as necessary, it should be determined by national policies with the involvement of the social partners. Some ministers held the view that the retirement age should evolve in line with life-expectancy while several others considered that pension reforms should be coupled with active labour market policies, lifelong learning opportunities, effective social security and healthcare systems and improvement of working conditions.

The report of the Commission on the consultation on the Green Paper "Towards adequate sustainable and safe European pension systems" is available [here](#).

- **The Council adopted the Joint Employment Report in the context of the Annual Growth Survey 2011:**

In order to respond to the crisis and to speed up Europe's economic growth, the

European Commission launched the European Semester with view of focusing Member States' efforts in a coordinated manner and with an eye on priorities. The Annual Growth Survey charts a clear direction on where Europe should be heading in the next year and is the start of the first "European Semester" which changes the way governments shape their economic and fiscal policies. The 2011 Joint Employment Report is part of the Commission package to launch the European Semester. As key input to strengthened economic guidance, the JER is primarily a forward looking analysis, expanding on key employment messages contained in the Annual Growth Survey. The Council, in its conclusions, emphasises the importance of strengthening efficient job-centred policies that stimulate labour supply of women and men. The Council also stresses the importance of reducing exclusion and the risk of long-term unemployment. Among others, the Council invites the Member States to favour the employment of second-earners – mainly women – and new hires. Some flexible work arrangements and child care facilities aiming at facilitating labour market participation and promote hours worked should also be set up.

Click [here](#) to access the Joint Employment Report as adopted by the Council.

Support to the pilot European Innovation Partnership "Active and Healthy Ageing"

The EU's 27 ministers in charge of competitiveness endorsed European Commission proposals to launch a [European innovation partnership on active and healthy ageing](#). In a parallel move, the European Commission proposed that 2012 be designated the European Year for Active Ageing to serve as a framework for raising awareness, identifying good practices and encouraging policymakers and stakeholders to promote active ageing. The idea is to help create better job opportunities and working conditions for the growing number of older people in Europe and help them to play an active role in society. The European Parliament is expected to endorse the proposal later this spring, before the Council gives its final approval in June.

Council Conclusions on preparatory work for the pilot European Innovation Partnership "Active and Healthy Ageing" are available [here](#).

European Commission

Conference on EU Mental Health Pact

EuroHealthNet participated in the conference hosted by the European Commission "Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being in Workplaces", in Berlin. The conference was the last of a series of five events. Among its conclusions, the conference recognised that prevention and health promotion are crucial and can contribute to the achievement of the EU 2020 objectives of inclusive growth. Estimates show that 10% of the EU population is affected by mental health problems and that, within the space of 1 year, 15% of EU citizens have sought professional assistance for psychological or emotional problems (2 percentage points higher than four years ago). Statistics indicate that mental disorders are increasingly the cause of absenteeism and premature retirement in enterprises, thus making them an important social and economic factor.

To read more about this event, please click [here](#).

For further information about actions elaborated in the frame of mental health, click [here](#).

List of indicators for public health

The ECHI (European Community Health Indicators) project was carried out under the Health Monitoring Programme and the Community Public Health Programme 2003-2008. The result is a list of 88 indicators for the public health field arranged according to a conceptual view on health and health determinants. Under the second Health programme (2008 – 2013), the ECHIM joint action aims to consolidate and expand the ECHI Indicator system towards a sustainable health monitoring system in Europe.

For further information, click [here](#).

E-Health moves ahead in Europe

Reports on e-Health strategies and implementations in 30 countries are now available. Study results show that in virtually all European countries surveyed, political as well as stakeholder interest in e-Health policies, and the planning and implementation of national or regional infrastructures, has gained great momentum. A host of experts as well as reviewers from the i2010 Subgroup on e-Health contributed their intimate knowledge of the e-Health situation in their respective countries and validated the content of the country reports.

For further details, click [here](#).

4th World Rare Diseases Day - Survey shows strong public support for European cooperation on rare diseases

In the frame of the World Rare Disease Day, the European Commission carried out a survey related to Europeans' concerns. The survey reveals that there is good general understanding from citizens, but detailed knowledge and awareness about rare diseases remain low. Almost all citizens agree that national health authorities should give support to those suffering from rare diseases and fully reimburse their medication, even if it is very expensive. 95% agree that there should be more European cooperation, and that those affected should have the right to access appropriate care in another Member State. There is also wide support for introducing national strategies for rare diseases.

For further details, click [here](#).

Roadmap for building a competitive low-carbon Europe by 2050

The European Commission adopted a Roadmap addressed to the Council, European Parliament and EU bodies for transforming the European Union into a competitive low carbon economy by 2050. The Roadmap describes the cost-effective pathway to reach the EU's objective of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% of 1990 levels by 2050. Based on the cost-effectiveness analysis undertaken, the Roadmap gives direction to sectoral policies, national and regional low-carbon strategies and long-term investments. The EU needs to start working now on long-term strategies, and the Roadmap provides guidance on how this transition can be achieved in the most cost-effective way. The Commission invites the Council, the European Parliament, Member States and stakeholders to take the Roadmap into account in the further development of EU and national policies for achieving a low carbon economy by 2050. As a next step the Commission sees a need to develop specific sectoral roadmaps in cooperation with the sectors concerned.

Questions and Answers on the low carbon roadmap are available [here](#).

The low carbon roadmap is available [here](#).

A resource-efficient Europe - Flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 Strategy is available [here](#).

Results of the EU-wide public consultation on pensions

The Commission presented the first summary of results of the EU-wide Green Paper consultation on how the EU can help to ensure adequate, sustainable and safe pensions for its citizens. The Consultation received nearly 1.700 responses from across the EU including around from Member State Governments, National Parliaments, business and trade union organisations, civil society and representatives of the pension industry.

Issues raised in the contributions included:

- The need for pension reforms to support sustainability of public finances and adequacy of pensions;
- Higher effective retirement ages are necessary;

- Pension tracking services are to be encouraged and facilitated so as EU citizens can keep track of all their pension entitlements;
- A recognition of the important role for the EU in the policy coordination of pension policies by facilitating surveillance, coordination and mutual learning between the Member States;
- EU regulations on occupational pensions should be reviewed to reap the full benefits of the Single Market.

The Commission is now building on these consultation results and will present a follow up after summer 2011, including possible legislative initiatives at EU level.

The report of the Commission on the consultation on the Green Paper "Towards adequate sustainable and safe European pension systems" is available [here](#).

Link to Green Paper replies, Replies and summary will be available [here](#).

- For EuroHealthNet, the link between pensions and health equity must be underlined. Adequate income for a healthy life, including through retirement by provision of pension support, is important to ward off the threat of poverty, ill health and social exclusion for older vulnerable people. Calling for the inclusion of the health equity dimension within European pension systems to strive towards social justice and economic efficiency, EuroHealthNet recommends specific approaches. The EuroHealthNet position is available [here](#).

Stress at work - Positive effect of the workers' and employers' agreement

The European Commission has published an evaluation of the 2004 social partners agreement on work-related stress, concluding that it has had positive effects where implemented. The role of employers is to identify risk factors for stress and to try to match responsibility better with skills; to consult workers on restructuring and new technologies; to provide support to individuals and teams. The Commission's evaluation of the agreement concludes that it has successfully triggered social dialogue and policy developments in the field of occupational stress in most EU countries. At the same time, the agreement has not been implemented evenly throughout Europe. Social partners in Malta, Cyprus, Poland and Slovenia have not reported on the follow-up to their commitments and results in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Estonia have fallen short of expectations.

For further details, click [here](#).

EU-funded research project - Ethnic Differences in Education for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe

The EU-funded research project – EDUMIGROM - investigating the impact of educational policies on Roma and second-generation migrant youth in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Policymakers and experts across Europe have recognised that ethnicity plays an increasingly important role in determining the career paths and life chances of young people. Despite antidiscrimination policies and considerable investment in education by European welfare states, Roma youths and young people from migrant backgrounds today face diminished opportunities for meaningful participation in economic, social, and political life. The study is available [here](#)

EU-funded research project - Young People from a Public Care Background: pathways to education in Europe (YiPPEE)

The EU-funded research project - YIPPEE - elaborated the first comparative study of young people who have been in state care as children and their post-compulsory education. More and more young people across Europe are staying in education after the end of compulsory school. But for those young people in the care of the state, the picture is very different: very few of even the 'good' students stay in education. The pressure is to get a job and be economically independent far earlier than most young people living with birth families. The YiPPEE project set out to investigate what helped and what obstacles were in the way of

completing further and higher education.

The study is available [here](#).

European Parliament

School Fruit Scheme - Not only fruit, but lifestyle

In the frame of a debate at the European Parliament, the European Commission pointed out that though the EU's School Fruit Scheme project initially gained support, in the first 2009-2010 year only €33 million of €90 million allocated was spent. With 22 million overweight children in the EU, the fruit scheme was a measure to encourage healthy lifestyle and eating habits from an earlier age. Some of the Member States decided to stay out of the project, mostly because of co-financing, having difficulty in finding resources. In Germany for example, 16 Länder (regions) were interested in the programme but only 7 choose to participate because of co-financing. Latvia and the United Kingdom opted not to participate in the School Fruit Scheme. MEPs **Giovanni La Via (Italy, EPP)** and **Elisabeth Jeggle (Germany, EPP)** criticised major delays in implementing the project, namely for being late in establishing the expert group.

Formal Responses to Parliamentary Questions

How to tackle child obesity?

Mr. Nuno Melo (Portugal, PPE) reminds the data provided by the OECD where 19% of Portuguese children aged between 11 and 15 are overweight or even already obese. Obesity has doubled in twenty years in most Member States, and a recent British study suggests that its cost could increase by almost 70% by 2015. Thus, what is the Commission's position on the OECD report and its indication of alarming numbers of obese children in Portugal and other EU Member States?

For **Mr. Dalli**, Commissioner responsible for Health and Consumer Policy, the Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues underlines areas and priority groups for action to promote healthy diets, as well as to reverse the decline in physical activity levels in recent decades. Children are one of the priority groups. The initiatives launched are described in the [2010 Implementation progress report](#), which shows substantial variation both between policy areas and Member States. Information and education campaigns and the provision of guidelines to encourage physical activity were amongst the areas with the highest implementation level. In the coming years, more focus should be put on the areas with fewer actions in place such as the availability of healthy food and physical activity facilities in workplaces, as well as on increasing the availability of healthy options through reformulation initiatives.

Towards an EU strategy on obesity

Mr. Diogo Feio (Portugal, PPE) reminds that obesity is the biggest and most serious health problem in the EU, which increases the probability of heart disease and is a risk factor in the development of other illnesses, particularly chronic ones. Mr. Feio wants to know what specific proposals the Commission will take to the high-level meeting currently taking place in Brussels and what campaigns it is considering launching to encourage better eating habits and a more active lifestyle in Europe

Commissioner Dalli states that the Commission has reported on the various initiatives taken to fight obesity in the [2010 report](#) on the implementation of the Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues. Initiatives such as health promotion campaigns related to nutrition and physical activity are discussed with the Member States' High Level Group for Nutrition and Physical Activity. In addition, the Commission, in its [White Paper](#), proposed that nutrition information, including the content of energy and fat, should be declared on the front-of-pack of the majority of processed products. The Council reached a political agreement on this dossier, which is expected to be transmitted to the European Parliament.

Healthy food and combating obesity

Mr. Liam Aylward (Ireland, ALDE) wants to know how effective are the measures adopted in the area of public health on promoting healthier ways of life, as set out in the Health Programme 2008 – 2013 and how can such measures be improved for the next programme? Is the Commission in a position to take any other action to assist Member States in combating obesity?

Commissioner Dalli stresses that it is strongly committed to permanently monitor and improve the effectiveness of its policies and programmes, including the Public Health Programme. An external mid-term evaluation has been undertaken with the purpose to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of funded actions. The results are expected by the third quarter of 2011. The conclusions and recommendations produced in the framework of the evaluation will feed into the ongoing implementation of the Health Programme up until its termination on 31 December 2013, and the preparation and design of the post-2013 programming period. The Commission is currently contributing to the implementation of the six-year Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues adopted in May 2007.

Foods for Medical Purposes

Ms **Antonyia Parvanova (Bulgaria, ALDE)** underlines that foods for Special Medical Purposes (FSMPs) must comply with general EU food legislation regarding food safety, hygiene, and labelling. However, some of the provisions currently foreseen, such as the minimum font size and nutrition declaration requirements under the Proposal on Food Information to Consumers, do not appear to be appropriate for use of these products by healthcare professionals and patients. Therefore, does the Commission intend to rectify the fact that the Proposal on Food Information to Consumers does not distinguish FSMPs as foods targeted at patients and not consumers? Will the Commission ensure that provisions regarding information about, and the labelling of, foods for medical purposes will take into account the specificity of such products and adequately respond to the needs of healthcare professionals and patients?

For **Commissioner Dalli**, the Commission proposal for a Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers provides for mandatory nutrition labelling and for a specific criteria for the font size of the mandatory food information. With respect to legibility the criteria would apply without prejudice to specific rules applying to certain foods. In the review of the framework legislation on foods for particular nutritional uses the Commission will carefully consider the potential need for specific rules for certain products, including if appropriate, on the labelling of foods for special medical purposes.

HIV/AIDS in Europe

Ms Marina Yannakoudakis (UK, ECR) wants to know about the progress of Member States in terms of the number of EU citizens diagnosed with HIV, the quality of life of people living with HIV, education, knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS. What is the Commission doing in terms of encouraging Member States to see the importance of testing for HIV?

Commissioner Dalli underlines that an intermediate evaluation is to be launched in 2012 and concluded in 2013. This will cover progress made by Member States in achieving the objectives of the Strategy. The Commission has referred to the importance of HIV testing in its Communication on combating HIV/AIDS. The issue has also been highlighted in the World AIDS conference in Vienna 2010, as well as on the occasion of World AIDS Day 2009 and 2010. HIV testing has also been discussed with Member States and neighbouring countries in the HIV/AIDS Think Tank on several occasions since 2007, and is promoted through a number of projects co-financed by the Health Programme.

Scientific evidence regarding indoor air quality

Chris Davies (UK, ALDE) asks for the Commission's assessment of current scientific evidence regarding the potential benefits to human health to be derived from improving the quality of air inside buildings.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn underlines that improving indoor air quality (IAQ) is an

important part of the [European Environment and Health Strategy](#). EU-funded research activities in this field were also launched in the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7, 2007-2013; EUR 22.2 million of EU funding allocated to projects addressing some aspects of IAQ). The four projects funded are focused on new building design and technologies to improve the impact of the indoor built [environment on health and comfort](#); identification of new health relevant pollutants in modern offices and [new IAQ comfort/health standards and guidelines for these spaces](#); improvement of IAQ by development and novel use of nano-materials; development of devices to measure nanoparticles in workplace air. The Commission's services have collaborated with the World Health Organisation in developing [health-based thresholds and guidelines for key pollutants](#) in order to form a robust basis for future actions on a number of chemicals commonly present in indoor air. The Commission intends to continue to work with Member States and stakeholders on this important issue. In doing so it will consider what additional measures, including legislation are appropriate.

Other

Executive Agency for Health & Consumers - Health impacts and costs of air pollution in European cities

The Aphekom project show that significant health and monetary benefits could result from further reducing current levels of air pollution in European cities. Air pollution of fine particles is associated with more than 455,000 premature deaths every year in the EU's 27 member states, according to a recent study by the European Topic Centre on Air and Climate Change (ETC/ACC) on behalf of the European Environment Agency (EEA). The new research which looks at 25 cities in 12 European countries also shows that living near busy roads substantially increases the total burden of disease attributable to air pollution. Researchers hope the Aphekom findings will also be taken into account in other EU public health policy areas, such as healthy ageing and reducing inequalities. Environmental determinants of health such as air pollution should be a concern for the EU's healthy ageing initiative, which aims to increase healthy lifespan by two years by 2020. Cleaner air can also help to reduce health inequalities as poorer families are more likely to live in polluted areas. The findings come at an important time. The European Commission is currently preparing for a review of EU air quality policy.

For further details on the Aphekom project, click [here](#)

For more information, contact [Anne Stauffer](#), Policy Manager, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

For further details on The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), click [here](#).

European Medicines Agency (EMA) - Launch of the strategy on medicines for older people

The European Medicines Agency will ensure that the needs of the ageing population in the European Union are taken into account in the development and evaluation of new medicines, according to its geriatric medicines strategy. The strategy sets out the Agency's vision for the development of medicines for the elderly by building on its existing activities. In particular, the Agency aims to:

- Ensure that the medicines used by older people are of high quality and are studied appropriately in the older population, both before and after authorisation;
- Improve the availability of information for older people on the use of medicines.

The strategy was adopted by the [Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use](#) (CHMP). It represents a key step forward in the Agency's commitment towards responding to its changing environment, as set out in its [Road map to 2015](#).

The geriatric medicines strategy is available [here](#).

For further details click [here](#)

European Food Safety Authority - New food consumption database

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published an overview of its first Comprehensive Food Consumption Database, a new source of information on food consumption in the European Union, containing detailed data for a number of EU countries. The new database will play a key role in the evaluation of the risks related to possible hazards in food in the EU and will allow more precise estimates of consumers' exposure to such hazards, a fundamental step in EFSA's risk assessment work.

For further details, click [here](#).

Eurostat - One person in six lives in an overcrowded dwelling

In European Union, housing conditions differ considerably between Member States. These differences can be seen both in the type of housing in which people live and in the housing problems they encounter. Housing conditions can be analysed through the problems of damp, darkness or the availability of sanitary equipment. There were significant differences between Member States when considering the sanitary equipment of dwellings. These figures on housing conditions are published in a report from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

For further details on the published data per country, click [here](#).

Eurostat – National differences in the GDP per inhabitant within the EU

In 2008, GDP per inhabitant, expressed in terms of purchasing power standards, in the EU27's ranged from 28% of the EU27 average in the region of Severozapaden in Bulgaria, to 343% of the average in Inner London in the United Kingdom. Among the 40 regions exceeding the 125% level, ten were in Germany, five in the Netherlands, four each in Austria and the United Kingdom, three each in Spain and Italy, two each in Belgium and Finland, one each in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, France, Slovakia and Sweden, as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The lowest regions in the ranking were all in Bulgaria and Romania, with the lowest figures recorded in Severozapaden in Bulgaria (28% of the average), followed by Nord-Est in Romania (29%), Severen tsentralen and Yuzhen tsentralen in Bulgaria (both 30%). These figures are published in a report from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

For further details on the published data per country, click [here](#).

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

National and local news

England - NICE - Help to local authorities to reduce number of child injuries and deaths

New tools to help councillors and local authority officers keep children and young people safe from harm are available online from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) website. These new resources have been especially designed to help local authorities implement new NICE guidance on preventing serious injuries and deaths to children under the age of 15. Unintentional injuries are a leading cause of death and serious injury in children and young people under 15.

For further details, click [here](#).

England – Launch of a new NIHR School for Public Health Research

A new public health research school designed to build closer relations between researchers and practitioners across Public Health England and Local Authorities was launched by the Public Health Minister. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Public Health Research will aim to increase the evidence base for effective public health practice by:

- Conducting research to increase the volume and quality of applied public health research and evidence, including evaluations;
- Creating an environment where first class applied public health research, focused on the needs of the public, can thrive.

It will place an emphasis on what works practically and can be applied across the whole of England and will comprise leading academic centres of applied public health research. The competition for funding is open to academic institutions with a proven track record in applied research and evaluative practice in public health. Each member of the school will receive up to £500,000 a year.

For further details, click [here](#).

France - INPES –Investigation on ageing in Europe

National Institute for Prevention and Health Education (Inpes) has coordinated research on needs for older or handicapped people in the field of health. The aims were to explore the different needs of these target groups and to study expectations from people giving cares. Results show that the system aiming to help these groups still need to be improved. Health and social systems have revealed their weaknesses.

For further details, click [here](#).

Germany – Federal Centre for Health Education - Quality criteria to prevent obesity in children and adolescents

The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) has developed quality criteria for health promotion and prevention of obesity in children and adolescents. The centre issued an information brochure that contains a checklist of 20 quality criteria, with additional information available. Those quality criteria have been successfully tested in practice and adopted by a group of experts. This brochure should support actors in the field to plan and implement new projects and to improve existing programs. The brochure also contains current data on overweight children, and strategies for health promotion and disease prevention.

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

The brochure ‘Quality Criteria for health promotion and primary prevention of obesity in children and young people’ (in German language) can be downloaded [here](#) or ordered [here](#).

Romania - MP seeks to ban smoking in all enclosed public spaces

Social-Democrat Deputy Manuela Mitrea filed a legal initiative aimed at completely banning smoking in all enclosed public spaces, including bars, restaurants, clubs and discos. The ban would also be applied to all public institutions and academic and education units. The MP says that such a law is necessary in Romania, given that one person is killed by smoking every four hours and passive smokers face a 30 per cent higher risk of becoming sick. The first country to enforce such an interdiction was Ireland, followed by France, several German lands, Spain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, United Kingdom and Poland. In the Czech Republic, a similar law failed to garner enough Parliament support, while Greece and Austria still allow smoking in several public places.

For further details, click [here](#).

Scotland – Health Scotland - To raise awareness of mental health in the workplace

Employees across Scotland are being offered an online training programme to raise awareness of mental health in the workplace. The course can be devised by NHS Health Scotland’s Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (SC HWL) and aims to improve the health of the working age population, in workplaces of all types and sizes. Adapted from the ‘Mentally Healthy Workplaces’ training programme for managers, the new course looks at the impact which mental health can have on the workplace, what employees can do to support themselves and their colleagues, and what they can expect from their employer.

For further details, click [here](#)

Sweden - Understanding rheumatoid arthritis

Scientists at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden have taken a step closer to understanding rheumatoid arthritis after discovering a new mechanism behind the disease. Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic, systemic inflammatory disorder that afflicts about 1% of the world's population, but whose cause remains a mystery. The study is funded in part by the EU through a EUR 1.6 million European Research Council (ERC).

The report is available [here](#).

The Netherlands - Dutch Healthcare performance report

The Dutch Health Care Performance Report 2010 is published by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). RIVM monitors trends in the quality, accessibility and costs of health care. Using a finite set of indicators, this third edition of the report assesses the performance of the health care system in 2008 and 2009 and compares it to previous years and to other countries.

The report is available [here](#).

Other international news

WHO - European countries take up the Health 2020 challenge

WHO/Europe has been mandated by the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region to develop a new health policy framework for Europe, called Health 2020 and to share experiences and strategies in implementing the [Tallinn Charter: "Health Systems for Health and Wealth"](#). The aim is to coordinate a coherent response to the current situation but also to plan for the next 10 years, using the evidence on which approaches and solutions work best. Member States agree that new and innovative policies are needed to deal with the pressing health issues in the European Region in a comprehensive, cost-effective and coordinated way. These issues include the epidemic of obesity, cancer and heart disease; large differences in health status and life expectancy; increasing mental disorders; re-emerging communicable diseases; and the need to plan for emergencies and pandemics. Action to address them has to take account of the impact of factors such as globalization, urbanization, climate change, a larger ageing population and the economic crisis. Health 2020 puts special emphasis on the key role of ministers of health as advocates and catalysts of action for health both within and beyond the boundaries of the health sector.

The Health 2020 framework will be built on the Health for All strategy and other key European health policy frameworks including the Tallinn Charter: "Health Systems for Health and Wealth". An interim report on the follow-up of the Tallinn Charter commitments highlights innovative examples of actions by countries and WHO that are consistent with the commitments of the Tallinn Charter, especially in light of the financial crisis. It also emphasizes the need for a rejuvenated effort in public health, and explains how Health 2020 will further many of the key concepts put forward in the Charter.

More details are available [here](#)

Information on European Member States plan for health in 2020 is available [here](#).

WHO – Publication on Priorities for research on equity and health

The report published by WHO aims to stimulate further thinking, debate and refinement of strategic approaches focusing WHO support and collaborations to advance global research on equity and health. It is not a comprehensive review of research in the area of equity and health, nor of approaches to support research policies and their implementation in this area.

The report is available [here](#).

WHO - Global status report on alcohol and health

The newly published report analyses available evidence on alcohol consumption, consequences and policy interventions and provides data in over 100 individual country profiles. The Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol promotes a range of proven effective measures for reducing alcohol-related harm. These include taxation on alcohol to reduce harmful drinking; reducing availability through allowing fewer outlets to sell alcohol, raising age limits for those buying and using effective drink-driving measures. The Global Strategy also promotes the screening and brief interventions in healthcare settings to change hazardous patterns of drinking, and treatment of alcohol use disorders; regulating or banning marketing of alcoholic beverages; and conducting information and educational campaigns in support of effective policy measures.

The report is available [here](#).

WHO - Putting our own house in order: examples of health-system action on socially determined health inequalities

WHO published a report giving policy advisers, policy entrepreneurs and those who work in health systems a better understanding of the keys to taking action on socially determined health inequalities. It illustrates the wide range of actual and potential actions that the health system can take to "put its own house in order": ensuring equity of access to health services and improving the investment in and approach to working with other sectors so that the health system is instrumental in creating the conditions for health for all groups in the population.

The report is available [here](#).

Web consultation for WHO Emergency Action Plan on HIV/AIDS

WHO Regional Office for Europe is currently developing an Emergency Action Plan on HIV/AIDS, 2012–2015, to address the current situation with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the European Region and lead an effective response to it. In pursuing a participatory and inclusive approach to the Action Plan development, WHO Regional Office for Europe invites contributions from a range of constituencies and key stakeholders including representatives of Member States, civil society, donor and development agencies, nongovernmental organizations, multilateral agencies, scientific and technical institutions and networks and the private sector, and leaders and experts in HIV and related programmes. **The online consultation will be accessible until 1 April 2011.**

Sign up and log in to the [site](#) to submit feedback.

OECD - Improving health care efficiency is key to curbing spiralling costs

The OECD warns that cash-strapped governments no longer have the option of boosting spending to improve health outcomes, as they have done over the past several decades. The OECD report recognises that the sharp rise in health care spending – which has grown by more than 70% per capita in real terms since the early-1990s – led to steady improvements in health outcomes across the OECD. Life expectancy has increased by one year every four years, survival rates from diseases like cancer are up, and premature births and infant mortality have dropped dramatically. However, cross-country comparative analysis highlights the uneven health care efficiency performance across the OECD countries.

The report and health care indicators per country are available [here](#).

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For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

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