January 2011

Calendar of events

January

26-28 January 2011: Global Risk Assessment Dialogue (Brussels, Belgium)

26-28 January 2011: Workshop on integrated environmental health impact assessment (IEHIA) (Brussels, Belgium)

27 January 2011: Later life: planning for an ageing population (London, UK)

27-28 January 2011: 7th Nationale Congres Gezondheidsbevordering en Preventie (Wageningen, the Netherlands)

February

4-7 February 2011: IMED 2011: International Meeting on Emerging Diseases and Surveillance (Vienna, Austria)

14-18 February 2011: Public Health Ethics: Scientific methods, foundational concepts, and case analyses (Hannover, Germany)

28 February 2011: Rare Disease Day 2011: Focus health inequalities

March

2-3 March 2011: 5th Annual European Nutrition & Lifestyle Conference (Brussels, Belgium)

3-4 March 2011: Promoting Mental Health and Well-being at Workplaces (Berlin, Germany)

8-9 March 2011: Health and Wellbeing at Work (Birmingham, UK)


16-19 March 2011: 4th World Congress on Women Mental Health (Madrid, Spain)

21-23 March 2011: IMH Health Impact Assessment Training Course (Belfast, Ireland)

23-26 March 2011: European Congress on Osteoporosis & Osteoarthritis (Valencia, Spain)

28-30 March 2011: European Conference Tobacco or Health (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

30-31 March 2011: Innovation in healthcare: from research to market (Brussels, Belgium)

EU News

EU agrees clearer rules on seeking healthcare abroad

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have approved a new directive setting out patients’ rights and states’ responsibilities for medical care that may be sought anywhere in the EU. Under the directive, which should become effective in 2013, EU citizens may be entitled for reimbursement of healthcare they receive in another Member State at home-country rates, as long as the type of treatment and costs is normally covered in their own country. A more detailed briefing will be sent to EuroHealthNet members and partners concerning the health equity aspects of this directive.

To read more about the Directive on cross-border healthcare, click here.

To read the European Parliament position click here.

EU puts the fight against poverty at the heart of goals for jobs and growth

As part of its Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the European Commission has launched a European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Platform will build on the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion in order to foster economic, social and territorial cohesion. It will primarily seek to support the EU target of lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion in the next decade by creating a joint commitment among the Member States, EU Institutions and the key stakeholders.

The Platform will set a framework for action to ensure that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared across the European Union and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society. The Commission has identified the following areas for action: Delivering actions across the policy spectrum; Greater and more effective use of the EU Funds to support social inclusion; Promoting evidence-based social innovation; Working in partnership and harnessing the potential of the social economy; Enhanced policy coordination among the Member States.

The EC Communication on the Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion is available here.

EuroHealthNet is actively engaged in this debate. For more information contact Stecy via S.Yghemonos@eurohealthnet.eu.

EU ratifies UN Convention on rights of people with disabilities

For the first time in history, the EU as a whole has ratified an international human rights treaty – the United Nation’s (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The Convention aims to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all other citizens. It sets out minimum standards for protecting and safeguarding a full range of civil, political, social, and economic rights for people with disabilities.

The Convention reflects the EU’s broader commitment to building a barrier-free Europe for the estimated 80 million people with disabilities in the EU by 2020, as set out in the European Commission’s disability strategy (IP/10/1509).
Inequalities in health system performance and their social determinants in Europe

A multi-donor project, led by the European Commission and WHO Europe, was recently launched in order to improve availability of and access to evidence on inequalities in health system performance. This includes quality of care and the structural determinants of such inequalities across countries and regions in Europe.

To fulfill this goal, several interactive atlases have been developed, such as demographic, socioeconomic, health status and health system resources categories, including more than 600 individual indicators.

- **Correlation map atlas** allows a quick visualization of two variables in maps and their association in a graph, where correlation analysis can also be performed.
- **Atlases of social inequalities** allow visualization of differences between the target value and the value in a region or group of regions.
- **Performance comparison atlas** allows quick comparison of several key indicators between a limited numbers of regions.

The project also aims to facilitate improved knowledge about the equity impact of various policies within and outside health systems. To fulfill this objective, tools and mechanisms have been developed for policy-makers and practitioners. These include a web-based resource of examples of health systems actions on socially determined health inequalities (SDHI).

Comments, suggestions for improvement and new examples are welcomed and can be addressed to info@ihd.euro.who.int

EU Health Examination Survey: Measuring the health of Europeans

The European Health Examination Survey (EHES) is a Joint Action between some European Member States and the European Commission, which is co-funded under the EU Health Programme 2008-2013. The purpose of the EHES is to provide data for the national and Europe wide planning and evaluation of health policies, health promotion and research.

EHES is being established to collect comparable, high quality data on the health and health risks of the European adult population. The survey includes an interview, and physiological and clinical measurements, such as weight, height and blood pressure, and the collection of blood samples for the measurement of cholesterol, glucose etc. The countries can include various additional measurements in the survey, such as functional capacity of the elderly.

For more information about the survey, please click here.

Fresh round of consultation on review of EU working time Directive begins as new implementation report published

As part of its review of the EU working time Directive, the European Commission has launched the mandatory second stage of consultation with workers’ and employers’ representatives at EU level. The new consultation asks for social partners’ views on options to review EU working time rules. It also presents the main results of the first-stage consultation of the social partners and provides an overview of the latest evidence on working time trends and patterns, as well as the social and economic impact of the current rules in Member States.

The second stage consultation paper seeks opinions on detailed options that cover key themes such as: on-call time, timing of minimum rest periods, tackling excessive working hours, better reconciliation of work and family life and clarifying areas whether the law appears unclear.

In parallel to the consultations, the Commission is carrying out an extensive impact assessment of the current rules including an examination of the legal application of the Directive in the Member States. There is also an independent study of the social and economic impact.

More information on the Working Time Directive is available here. In addition, an Equity
Channel briefing on the Working Time Directive is available [here](#).

**2010 Work plan for the implementation of the Community action in the field of health (2008-2013)**

The European Commission has published its amendments of Decision 2009/964/EU on the adoption of the Work plan for 2010 for the implementation of the second programme of Community action in the field of health (2008- 2013). The changes include amendments on the selection, award and other criteria for financial contributions to the actions of this programme and Community payment to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

To view the amendments, please click [here](#).

**New Europe for patients website online**

The new Europe for Patients website is now online. The website is a thematic and multilingual information hub where updated factsheets, news, events, press releases and videos can be found on relation to the campaign. On the web pages people can also find a brief description of the policies, latest updates, upcoming conferences and the initiatives linked to the campaign such as EU health prize for journalists.

The information is presented by 11 policies of the campaign that put patients at the centre of EU health policy. These include cross border health care; rare diseases; organ donation and transplantation; health workforce; patient safety; cancer; flu vaccination; childhood vaccination; use of antibiotics; mental health; Alzheimer and other dementia.

To visit the website, please click [here](#).

**Youth Health event - FOOD FOR MIND. MIND FOR HEALTH**

The youth health event “Food for Mind. Mind for Health” was organised by the IUHPE-CIPES European Centre in Torino, Italy. The meeting aimed at involving young participants in the decisional process concerning their health, with a particular reference to 3 themes: sexual health, food and youth health advocacy. As a result of the event, a series of recommendations were elaborated on these three themes.

The event was designed as a follow-up to the “Be healthy, Be yourself” Conference organised in Brussels in 2009 by the European Commission in cooperation with the European Youth Forum and other youth organisations. It also complemented the “Youth health and well-being” European Conference organised in Rome in 2010 by the Italian Youth Ministry.

The recommendations on sexual health, food and youth health advocacy can be found [here](#).

**Report by Parliament on Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias**

The Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament has published a report on a European initiative on Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. It calls on the Council to declare dementia an EU health priority and strongly urges the Member States to develop specific national plans and strategies for Alzheimer’s disease in order to deal with the social and health consequences of dementia and to provide services and support for people with dementia and their families. Additionally, it calls on the Council and the Commission to take account of the concept of dementia when preparing future actions in the area of preventive health policy, notably in relation to its interaction with cardiovascular illnesses, mental health, physical activity, education in the field of health and new technologies.

Every year 1.4 million citizens living in Europe develop some type of dementia, and a new case is diagnosed every 24 seconds. It is estimated that more than 8 million Europeans aged between 30 and 99 suffer from neurodegenerative diseases, and scientists anticipate that this number could double every 20 years.

To access the report by the ENVI committee of the European Parliament, please click [here](#).

**New approach detects Alzheimer’s disease markers in the blood**

Scientists have used a new approach to detect Alzheimer’s disease in the blood according to research published in the journal [Cell](#). Scientists from Scripps Research Institute used synthetic compounds to ‘fish’ for antibodies in the blood that increase when a person has a particular disease. Three compounds used by researchers were effective in picking up
Alzheimer's disease in blood samples of 12 people and in mouse models. The research now needs to be replicated and tested on a larger scale. If successful scientists hope the technique could be developed into a new way of detecting many other conditions.

More information is available here.

**European Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion**

The programme for the 3rd European Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion -Budapest 16-17 June 2011 - is now available. The conference is being organised by EuroSafe and the government of the Republic of Hungary - currently President of the European Council - and is co-sponsored by the European Commission and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

This conference is a major international event bringing stakeholders in the prevention of accidents and injuries from Europe and other continents to exchange, debate and discuss the latest results in injury research, policies and practices. The key theme of the conference is how best to transfer and apply of good practice in injury prevention in new settings and environments. The conference will highlight successful safety promotion initiatives and actions and encourages uptake of good practice in countries.

The deadline for poster abstracts has now been extended to 15 February. More information is available here.

**Commission signs eHealth agreement with US Department of Health**

The European Commission and the United States have signed a Memorandum of understanding to promote a common approach on the interoperability of electronic health records and on education programmes for information technology and health professionals. The agreement aims to boost the potential of the ehealth market for EU companies wishing to do business in the US and vice versa. Promoting the use of eHealth technologies, with a view to improving the quality of health care, reducing medical costs and fostering independent living, including in remote places, is key objective of the Digital Agenda for Europe.

Potential activities foreseen within the framework of the Memorandum include: exchanges of information on ongoing activities that are carried out directly by the Commission and HHS, and that are relevant to the promotion of eHealth; exchanges of delegations and specialists, selected with the endorsement of the Commission and HHS, for example in the framework of the Commission’s eHealth Governance Initiative; establishment of joint working groups to identify specific strategies for achieving shared goals, and collaboratively organised meetings, scientific conferences, workshops and/or symposia.

More information about the agreement is available here.

**European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing**

A summary report of the stakeholders’ conference on the pilot European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, which took place in Brussels on 26 November 2010, is now available. It can be found here, clicking on "Stakeholder event (26 November 2010)".

**Seventh European Alcohol and health Forum plenary meeting**

All presentations played during the Seventh European Alcohol and health Forum plenary meeting that took place on 18 November 2010 are available here.

**Summary report on Experts Group on Health Information now available**

A summary report on the meeting of the Experts Group on Health Information held in Luxemburg on 22 November 2010 is available here.

**Health Programme - List of National Focal Points updated**

An updated list of national focal points has been published in relation to the Health Programme.

The list is available here.

**Roma Integration: First findings of Roma Task Force and report on**
Social Inclusion

In September 2010, the European Commission established an internal Task Force to assess Member States’ use of EU funding with regard to the social and economic integration of Roma, Europe's largest ethnic minority. The Task Force noted that while EU funds offer considerable potential for bolstering Roma inclusion, bottlenecks at national, regional and local levels are limiting their effective use by Member States. The Roma Task Force will continue its work in identifying concrete ways to enhance the funds’ uses. The results will be part of an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies in the Member States that will be presented by the Commission in spring 2011, for discussion in the European Parliament and the Council.

A new study – just released by the Commission– analysed national Roma inclusion measures in 18 EU countries and identified a series of successful policy approaches. Integrated policies and projects addressing the multiple causes of social exclusion are the best ways to improve the situation of Roma in Europe, the study says.

To read more about these issues, click here.

Joint report on Pensions

A joint report by the Economic Policy Committee (Ageing Working Group), the Social Protection Committee (Indicators Sub-Group) and the Commission DG for Economic and Financial Affairs and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, has been published that analyses pension systems in the EU. It assesses the pension reforms in the light of aggravated challenges and develops an updated agenda for delivering adequate and sustainable pensions.

The joint report focuses on: the results of the last decade of reforms; the impact of the crisis; and the long term perspective beyond the crisis. It notes that ensuring that public policies cater for sustainable, accessible and adequate retirement incomes now and in the future remains a priority for the EU.

More information, and the full joint report, can be found on the website of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Consolidated text adopted on an Energy Efficiency Action Plan

The Commission has proposed an Action Plan aimed at achieving a 20% reduction in energy consumption by 2020. The Action Plan includes measures to improve the energy performance of products, buildings and services, to improve the yield of energy production and distribution, to reduce the impact of transport on energy consumption, to facilitate financing and investments in the sector, to encourage and consolidate rational energy consumption behaviour and to step up international action on energy efficiency. The consolidated version of the text has been adopted by the European parliament.

The Energy Efficiency Action Plan is available here. More information can be obtained here.

Has policy improved Europe's air quality?

The EU has introduced a range of policies to improve air quality by controlling pollutant emissions. A new report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) evaluates three key instruments and finds that they have significantly improved Europe's air quality and reduced pollution-induced health effects. There is scope for even more progress, however, if countries achieve all their binding commitments to reduce emissions.

The EU introduced the Euro emission standards for road vehicles and directives on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) and Large Combustion Plants (LCP) to reduce air pollutant emissions from these sources. But how effective have they been? A new EEA study 'Impact of selected policy measures on Europe's air quality' aims to provide an answer, analysing how much these policies have reduced air pollutant emissions and improved Europe's air quality compared to a 'no-policy scenario'. It also explores how much better air quality could be if the policies were fully applied.

For more information, please click here.

Calendar of activities during the Hungarian EU Presidency

The full calendar of meetings for the Council of the European Union to be held under the
Hungarian Presidency is available here.

Other international news

Four countries release data on exposure to second-hand smoke

Four countries that participate in the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) - Poland, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine - have released their data. This marks the completion of Phase I of GATS in all 14 countries participating worldwide.

Key findings show that non-smokers’ exposure to second-hand smoke is alarmingly high in the hospitality sector, workplace and home. Policies encouraging people voluntarily to make their homes smoke free would significantly reduce the exposure of child and adult non-smokers to second-hand smoke (although voluntary policies for public places have proven extremely ineffective). GATS is designed to produce national and sub-national estimates on topics such as adults’ exposure to second-hand smoke, which are a powerful tool for policymakers.

Please visit the website of the WHO Europe Region for further information.

International guidelines set on chemical pollutants in indoor air

Europeans spend more than 80% of their time indoors where air pollution can be more hazardous to health than outdoors. Yet, despite monitoring and regulation of outdoor air pollutants, there were no guidelines on chemical pollutants in indoor air until now. The World Health Organization has just released its international WHO indoor air quality guidelines on indoor chemicals. The new guidelines could prompt further consideration of an overall framework on indoor air pollution. At present, no comprehensive legislation exists on indoor air quality.

To read more about the WHO indoor air quality guidelines, click here.

National and local news

Finns willing to pay more tax on alcohol and tobacco

Finns appear willing to favour increases in taxation on alcohol, tobacco, confectionery and capital gains in order to balance public finances. This is the outcome of a survey commissioned by YLE, a Finnish newspaper.

The pollster asked over 1,000 Finns just before Christmas what taxes could be raised to balance public finances. Some 61 percent of those asked say they were ready to accept an increase on taxation on alcohol and tobacco products. Next on the list was capital gains tax with 42 percent giving their approval for a tax rise. One third of those questioned favoured a tax rise on confectionery and soft drinks.

More information can be found on the website of YLE.

Ireland: New data on the changing face of poverty

In the Republic of Ireland, new features in the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2009 report include data on children’s deprivation and preliminary estimates of persistent poverty. Income distribution was becoming less unequal and those at risk of poverty rates remained fairly static. There was a sharp increase in the numbers of households reporting deprivation, with children remaining the group most vulnerable to poverty.

In Northern Ireland, similar patterns were reported in the Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Baseline Report with static relative income poverty. Pensioners were the group most vulnerable to poverty and income inequality appeared to be widening. Despite ongoing increases in life expectancy, there was little improvement evident in reducing premature mortality or the social inequalities evident in mortality rates.

More information on the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) for the Republic of Ireland is available here. In addition, access to the Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Framework Baseline Report (Northern Ireland) is available here.

Comprehensive HIA Training Course
The next Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Comprehensive Training course conducted by the Irish Institute of Public Health will take place on 21-23 March 2011 in Belfast. The closing date is **Friday 4 February** and an application form and further information is available [here](#). The course costs £250/€300 however a small number of bursary places are available. Should you require further information please contact Leah Friend at Leah.Friend@publichealth.ie.

**Spain gets tough anti-smoking law**

Spain has brought an anti-smoking law into force that is likely to turn the EU's fourth largest tobacco producer into one of Europe's most stringently smokeless. The law prohibits lighting up in enclosed public places, although hotels are allowed to reserve 30% of their rooms for smokers. In a particularly tough measure, outside smoking is banned in open-air children's playgrounds - even those inside parks - and at access points to schools and hospitals.

Health Minister Leire Pajin said around 50,000 people died each year in Spain as a result of smoking-related illnesses, with around 1,200 of those being non smokers who inhaled second-hand smoke.

The law stipulates that a minor infringement should be penalised with fines from 30 euro (£25) to 600 euro (£514) while very serious breaches will attract fines from 10,000 euro (£851,000) to 600,000 euro (£514,000).

[Click here](#) for more information.

**UK: Cancer strategy could save 5,000 lives a year**

Detailed plans to transform cancer care in England and save thousands of extra lives each year have been announced by Health Secretary Andrew Lansley. These plans should boost England’s cancer survival rates so that by 2014/15 an extra 5,000 lives will be saved every year.

*Improving Outcomes – A Strategy for Cancer*, sets out how the Government, NHS and public can prevent cancer, improve the quality and efficiency of cancer services and move towards achieving outcomes which rival the best in Europe.

The Strategy – backed with more than £750 million over four years – sets out a range of actions to improve cancer outcomes, including: diagnosing cancer earlier; helping people to live healthier lives to reduce preventable cancers; screening more people; introducing new screening programmes; and making sure that all patients have access to the best possible treatment, care and support.

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

**UK: No change in health gap between England’s richest and poorest**

Significant health inequalities still exist between the country’s richest and poorest according to the latest findings from the biggest annual survey of health: "The Health Survey for England". The survey, conducted by the National Centre for Social Research and UCL and funded by The NHS Information Centre, shows that people in the lowest income households continue to experience much worse outcomes across key health measures than people in the highest income households.

Men and women in the lowest income bracket are three times more likely than those in the highest income bracket to have kidney disease and to smoke. The disparity in health between England’s richest and poorest is particularly marked amongst women, with those in the lowest income bracket four times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and twice as likely to be obese than women in the highest income bracket.

More information about The Health Survey for England can be found on the website of UCL.

**New Communications Coordinator at EuroHealthNet**

Ariane Moret joined the EuroHealthNet office as a Communications Coordinator earlier this month. She will be your contact person for any questions/requests you may have regarding Health Highlights or the EuroHealthNet communication strategy.

Ariane is French and studied European law and journalism in Bordeaux (France) and in The
Hague (The Netherlands). She moved to Brussels in 1999 when she started to work at European level, for the European Institutions and for European Federations. She spent 6 years in the European Commission where she coordinated different communication campaigns (European Constitution, Asylum and Immigration policy). She gained some experience in health issues working for the European Consumers’ Organisation (BEUC).

You can contact Ariane at a.moret@eurohealthnet.eu or by phone - +32 2 235 03 28

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