

COMMISSION TO TACKLE HEALTH INEQUALITIES

The European Commission is to publish a Communication before the end of the year aimed at addressing the growing 'health gap' across the EU and within member states. The Communication forms part of the Commission's Health Strategy, published in 2007, which stresses the need to tackle health inequalities. In June 2008 the European Council also called for greater efforts to close the gaps in key health areas.

A consultation has been launched to collect the views of key stakeholders on how the European Union can contribute to reducing health inequalities. EHMA is due to respond to the consultation and will inform Members on its response shortly.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/socio_economics/cons_inequalities_en.htm

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ADOPTS OPINION ON CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE

The opinion, adopted on 12 February, highlights the importance of prior authorisation for patients seeking medical treatment in other EU Member States. In other words, patients should be required to provide proof of prior approval from their Member State when seeking medical aid elsewhere in Europe. According to Karsten Uno Petersen, who drafted the opinion, this helps to make sure that Member States and regions continue to be responsible for guaranteeing the quality of their health care systems.

The opinion will be sent to the European Parliament for consideration. However, it remains unclear whether the Parliament will accept this opinion as last month it stressed the importance of balancing prior authorisation with the freedom to access healthcare anywhere in the EU.

<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/PressTemplate.aspx?view=detail&id=ecd0e72b-11b9-4177-882c-64c7dc55c85a>

COMMISSION PUBLISHES PUBLIC HEALTH WORK PLAN

The European Commission has published its 2009 Work Plan for the implementation of the second programme of Community action in the field of health. The publication of the Work Plan was followed by the calls for proposals. The calls present new funding opportunities for the European organisations active in the area of public health. The total budget available for the execution of the 2009 Work Plan is 48.2 million euro. To see the Work Plan and the calls for proposals please go to:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServLexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:053:0041:0073:EN:PDF>

<http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/index.html>

ECJ RULES AGAINST FRANCE IN HEALTH PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY CASE

On 10 February the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled against France for unlawfully denying access to Bulgarian and Romanian medics and dentists to the French labour market. The court ruled that France had failed to transpose elements of EU legislation on the free movement of persons regarding the two latest newcomers, Bulgaria and Romania.

[http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/form.pl?lang=EN&Submit=Rechercher\\$docrequire=alldocs&numaff=C224/08&datefs=&datefe=&nomusuel=&domaine=&mots=&resmax=100](http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/form.pl?lang=EN&Submit=Rechercher$docrequire=alldocs&numaff=C224/08&datefs=&datefe=&nomusuel=&domaine=&mots=&resmax=100)

E-HEALTH IN ACTION

“eHealth in Action: Good Practice in European Countries” is the title of a new study carried out by the Good eHealth Team on behalf of the European Commission. It identifies good practices on eHealth in 30 European Countries. The study is available online at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/docs/studies/2009good_eHealth-report.pdf

INFORMATION DAY ON PUBLIC HEALTH CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

On 18 March, the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) and DG SANCO will organise an Information Day in Luxembourg on the 2009 Calls for proposals for projects, operating grants, conferences and joint actions in the Health Sector. This will be an opportunity to learn about the Health Work Plan for 2009 which was adopted at the end of February (see separate article) and will include practical workshops on the different aspects of the calls and the application process. More information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_programme/howtoapply/infoday_2009/info_day_en.htm

SPAIN WARNED OVER HEALTHCARE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST EU PENSIONERS

Spain has been warned by the European Commission for refusing access to free medication to EU pensioners temporarily staying in the country. The Commission cautions that this policy fails to comply with EU legislation on equal access to necessary healthcare for every EU resident. The Spanish authorities now have two months to respond. If they fail to do so or if the response is unsatisfactory, the Commission can decide to take Spain to the European Court of Justice.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/295&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

DISCUSSION ABOUT NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HEALTH COMMITTEE

A new Parliamentary Committee dedicated to health and consumer affairs is likely to be created as a result of internal reforms in the European Parliament to bring greater efficiency to the work of MEPs and to add weight to key areas like health, energy and the environment. The new Committee would cover the programme of work undertaken by DG SANCO of the European Commission, but it is hoped that its remit would extend beyond this to wider EU policies (outside DG SANCO) that impact on health such as pharmaceuticals.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20070215IPR03201>

CZECH EU PRESIDENCY MEETS CHIEF NURSING OFFICERS

On 4 February the Czech Presidency of the European Union welcomed European Chief Nursing Officers (CNO's) at a conference in Prague aimed at establishing a policy dialogue on the migration of nurses and discussing the new EU green paper on the workforce for health. The CNO's agreed on the importance of lifelong learning for the quality of health services, nursing care and patient safety. However, they stressed the lack of information on the number and flows of health staff, sources and activities, technical background, organisational conditions, standards and indicators to establish efficient policies on cross border migration.

<http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/czech-presidency-welcomes-the-green-paper-on-european-workforce-for-health--8806/>

PUBLICATION: MANAGING CHRONIC CONDITIONS

"Managing Chronic Conditions: Experience in eight countries" is the title of a new publication from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. It seeks to examine the health system response to the rising burden of chronic disease in eight countries. It is now available online at:

<http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E92058.pdf>