



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumers** Council meeting on 6 and
7 December 2012

Conferences organised by the Cyprus Presidency
- Information from the Presidency
(Other business item)

Delegations will find annexed an information note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject.

**Information on the conferences organised
by the Cyprus Presidency
EPSCO
6-7 December 2012**

The Cyprus Presidency has promoted its main health priorities on “Healthy Ageing across the Lifecycle”, “Organ Donation and Transplantation”, “Cross Border Health Treats” and “Innovative Approaches in Healthcare”, stressing the importance of promotion, prevention and the principle of “Better Health for All”. For that purpose, the Presidency organised various conferences and meetings, the main of which are briefly described below:

1. Expert Level Conference on “Cross Border Health Threats in the EU and its neighboring countries - focus on Communicable Diseases”, Nicosia, 5th July 2012

The Presidency , in cooperation with the European Commission, the WHO-Regional Office for Europe and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, organized a conference on «Cross Border health threats in the EU and its neighbouring countries –focus on communicable diseases».

The conference welcomed experts from the EU27, Croatia, the European Economic Area, the Southern European Neighbouring Region and the Health Network of South Eastern Europe, either as speakers or as participants. The conference started with four Keynote Presentations that set out both the European and the international scene, followed by two plenary sessions. The latter focused on lessons learnt from previous incidences of cross border health threats and ways of improving countries’ preparedness through capacity building, as well as the importance of strong collaboration and communication mechanisms and epidemiological training of health care professionals.

The Conference highlighted the role of the Union as an effective channel of communication and as a means of strengthening mechanisms for prevention, early warning and effective control of communicable diseases in the broader European area.

Addressing serious cross border health threats was one of the major health issues dealt both by the MS and the EU. Experiences and lessons learnt from previous years showed that strong capacity building and collaboration mechanisms are necessary to cover all types of serious cross-border health threats and require that aspects of prevention and communication are also addressed. In December 2011, the European Commission adopted a legislative proposal regarding several ways to address serious cross border threats to health. The main objective of the proposal is the protection of the European citizens from a wide range of health threats such as chemical, biological or environmental in nature and the provision of fully coordinated response in the event of a crisis.

As the above topic consists one of the Cyprus Presidency's priorities and taking into account the Commission's initiative and the fact that collaboration should not only be limited at EU level, but also be extended to other neighboring non-EU countries and international organizations, the Presidency organized the above conference with a focus on advancing the discussions on this proposal and on activities for promoting the regional dimension of health security and capacity building.

2. Informal Meeting of Ministers of Health, Nicosia, 10th – 11th July 2012

The discussions during the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Health concentrated on the priorities set and more particular on the issues of Organ Donation and Transplantation and the Risk and Crisis Communication Strategies in relation to Cross Border Health Threats.

On the issue of Organ Donation and Transplantation, the EU Ministers of Health identified the need for each Member State to adopt and implement specific programmes on organ donation and transplantation and discussed different ways of strengthening cooperation, as well as exchanging best practices and experiences.

In addition, during discussions on the second and final day of the Informal Meeting, Ministers were urged to identify the need to strengthen coordination mechanisms for correct and timely communication and risk assessments at the onset of a crisis relating to cross-border health threats.

Recognizing the need for strengthening coordination mechanisms for proper and timely communication and risk assessment at the beginning of a crisis, the Ministers expressed their support to the operation and work of the Health Security Committee, which is the key EU mechanism for coordinating and further enhancing health security efforts in the EU.

In addition, during the working lunch, the Ministers held a debate on the European Commission's Action Plan on the EU Health Workforce, as part of the Employment Package. The discussions highlighted the need to adopt innovative approaches and strategies to improve youth employment in the health sector, equipping young people with the right skills through education, training and job opportunities.

3. Competent Authorities of Medical Devices Meeting, Larnaka, 18th – 19th July 2012

The meeting brought together delegates of the Competent Authorities for Medical Devices of EU Member States, the EFTA states and the candidate countries, including the participation of European Commission.

From a strategic point of view, the Commission reported on the progress in drafting the new regulation on medical devices, with the enhancement of the safety of the medical devices in the European market as a main objective. Additionally, the representatives of the Competent Authorities discussed the use of patient registries as a means to improve public health.

4. High Level Conference on “Healthy Ageing across the Lifecycle”, Nicosia, 5th-6th September 2012

The Cyprus Presidency considering existing work undertaken in the area of Healthy Ageing takes forward a significant step for raising this issue and its wider social and economic costs to the European agenda, towards a “Better Health for All”.

In this respect, a high level conference on “Healthy Ageing across the Lifecycle” was held in Nicosia, on 5th - 6th of September 2012. The Conference was co-funded by the Cyprus Presidency and the European Commission (2nd Programme of Community Action in the field of Health).

This conference gathered high calibre experts from the EU Member States, the European Commission, the World Health Organisation, Academic Institutions, NGO's and other EU organisations, active in the area of Healthy Ageing.

The Conference's deliberations emphasized that healthy ageing is a continuous process across the lifecycle that needs to be enhanced and promoted through disease prevention, early diagnosis and health promotion programmes, in every stage of life, from early childhood to adolescence, to working age people and people of later life. It has also underlined the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary action in health promotion and disease prevention, which includes work across society and policy areas, involving public authorities and stakeholders at all levels including, health professionals and patients, social partners and civil society, the media and economic actors.

Moreover, the structure of the conference included a number of parallel sessions covering the following areas:

- Health Promotion in Childhood and Adolescence.
- Health Promotion in Working Age People.
- Wellbeing in Later Life (including Innovative Therapeutic Approaches in Elderly Care with focus on Neurodegenerative Diseases, and Tackling of physical frailty) .

Based on the conference's results it is worth saying that healthy ageing is closely related to initiatives taken towards health promotion and early disease prevention across the lifecycle. Indisputably, the implementation of long term healthy ageing policies and programmes, covering all age groups, can have a potential to endorse the social cohesion of the ageing population and transform a sustainable development.

5. Heads of Medicines Agencies (HMA) Meeting, Limassol, 20th – 21st September 2012

During the HMA meeting, the European Commission (EC) presented to the participants the Proposal for a Regulation on clinical trials on medicinal products for human use and repealing Directive 2001/20/EC. A comparison between the Voluntary Harmonisation Procedure followed by Member States and the assessment procedure foreseen in the clinical trials proposal was also presented.

Furthermore, the status report on the implementation of the Pharmacovigilance legislation and PRAC Rules of Procedures and early experiences was discussed. EMA summarised the first experiences with PRAC meetings and recent developments in the preparation and finalisation of Good Vigilance Practice GVP modules. First experiences with the PRAC were very positive. The Rules of Procedure will be ready for adoption during the next EMA Management Board in London.

With regards to the revision of the Fees Regulation, HMA emphasised that any amended fee structure (as proposed in the current public consultation of the EC) should reflect the NCAs right to an equitable proportion of that fee based on the contribution of the work provided by the NCAs. HMA decided to liaise with EMA and the EC to review the issue of fees.

HMA adopted the Reflection Paper on "Products Supply Shortages caused by Manufacturing or GMP compliance problems" and encouraged heads to carry out risk analysis of their markets and feed in the data centrally.

Participants included Heads and Officials from the Medicines Agencies (human and veterinary), the Commission and the European Medicines Agencies.

6. Joint Chief Medical, Nursing and Dental Officers Meeting, Nicosia, 9th – 10th October 2012

The main aim of the joint meeting was concentrated on Primary Health Care as an Innovative interdisciplinary Approach.

The discussions clearly highlighted the need to improve the quality of healthcare through innovative processes, with particular attention on the role of the primary health care, taking into consideration the challenges that the healthcare systems are facing today mainly associated with the ageing population, the continuous growth of health spending and the increasing demands of patients.

The joint meeting also recognized the need for effective and continuous training of all health professionals as well as highlighting the need for holistic and human approaches towards patients. In addition, the participants stressed the importance of cooperation among all health professionals such as doctors, nurses, dentists and other entities.

It is worth mentioning that during the Parallel Session of the Chief Medical Officers, deliberations showed that due to the ageing population, chronic diseases are expected to increase significantly over the forthcoming years. Since the implementation of health systems are in danger of collapse due to the expected increase in demand, it seems that primary health care provision might be the solution to their sustainability.

Finally, the conclusions of the joint meeting identified that a multidisciplinary approach to health is the cornerstone of primary health care, with the use of innovative approaches which have the ability to contribute decisively in ensuring healthy and active ageing, while providing quality and low cost health services, by ensuring their financial sustainability.

7. High Level Conference on INNOVAHEALTH, Larnaka, 11th – 13th October 2012

The purpose of the conference was to discuss the strategy document prepared by the INNOVAHEALTH task force and endorse the recommendations made in the document. The INNOVAHEALTH strategy was developed to provide an Open Innovation roadmap to create an integrated and interdependent environment (ecosystem) where companies, scientists, policymakers, governments, patients and other organisations can interact productively to promote radical change and innovation in healthcare supported by new developments in information and communication technologies (ICT). The aim is to create sustainable, affordable, citizen centric healthcare systems, which leverage new technologies whilst at the same time stimulating the EU economy and creating new employment opportunities. Presentations were made at the conference on the aspects of open innovation and healthcare presented in the strategy document and revisions were made to the strategy as a result of input from this meeting.

The main Conference outcome is that the EU needs to build an open innovation ecosystem for Europe in healthcare to incentivise an open innovation culture and environment that will promote economic growth, increase employment and reduce healthcare costs. The key recommendations are the following:

- To establish a new Public-Private Partnership under Horizon 2020 focused on common industry and public health needs, building on the achievements of and lessons learned from the Innovative Medicines Initiative.
- To create a cross directorate task force within the European Commission to address the barriers to establishment of this Open Innovation healthcare ecosystem through a partnership centred approach.
- To create a European Health Institute aiming at integrating the different actions from multiple stakeholders needed to empower citizens to be at the heart of healthcare across the European Union.
- To use the upcoming industrial policies (as announced in the Commission Update of the Industrial Policy flagship initiative – “A Stronger European Industry for Growth and Economic Recovery”, 10th October 2012) to develop the concept of “lead markets” for life science innovation.

8. Annual Meeting of the Advisory Forum of EFSA, Paphos, 5th -6th December 2012

The 46th Meeting of the Advisory Forum of EFSA is held in Cyprus, under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU, on the 5th-6th December 2012 and covers the exchange of information, current food safety issues (such as Bisphenol A and GMOs), harmonisation of risk assessment approaches and methodologies and uncertainties in risk assessment and environmental risk assessment.

Additionally, the annual meeting of the Heads of the EU Food Safety Agencies on the 4th December 2012 precedes the Advisory Forum Meeting and is organised by the Cyprus Food Safety Council of the Ministry of Health with the support of DG SANCO. The subjects addressed are the “New challenges in Food and Feed Safety controls and harmonised methods in Risk Assessment, new regulatory challenges and the role of Cyprus at the borders of EU”.