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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**
meeting on 17 June 2016
Helping member states in their use of health systems performance
assessment
– *Information from the Commission*
(Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above mentioned subject.

Helping member states in their use of health systems performance assessment***Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment***

As a follow-up to a reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems, and following Council calls to improve the coordination on health systems performance assessment (HSPA) at EU level, the Council Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL) gave mandate to the Commission to launch an expert group on health systems performance assessment. This expert group provides a forum for gathering evidence and exchanging experiences on the use of HSPA, and puts them at the services of national policy-makers by identifying tools and methodologies for developing HSPA.

The Expert Group, created in November 2014, has been open to all EU Member States, EEA/EFTA States, with the participation of the OECD, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Sweden has taken a leading role in setting up the group and currently chairs it together with the European Commission.

The Expert Group decided to focus each year on a different priority area. In 2015 it focused on quality of care, and in particular on the identification of tools and methodologies to support national policy-makers in assessing quality of care and developing relevant policy actions. These findings were collected in a comprehensive report published in April 2016.

The priority identified for 2016 is the performance of integrated care systems. The Expert Group is currently investigating ways of assessing integrated care, in close cooperation with international organisations, and plans to report back to the WPPHSL in early 2017.

In 2017, the Group will focus on the assessment of primary care. This activity will represent a natural follow-up and a complement to the work on integrated care.

Beyond these thematic priorities, the Group promotes exchange of experiences on horizontal and cross-cutting issues, such as the way results are communicated, the trade-offs between accuracy of analysis and simplicity of the presentation, composite indicators, etc.

Finally, the Group plans to support individual Member States in their specific HSPA activities. The recent meeting of the Expert Group in Rome in April 2016 took place back-to-back to a seminar with Italian authorities on the evaluation of integrated care, and represented a first experiment in this direction.

***First report of the expert group: 'Strategies across Europe to assess quality of care'*¹**

The report "*So What? Strategies across Europe to assess quality of care*" presented to the WPPHSL in February 2016 and published in April 2016 collects and shares examples of best practice in assessing the quality of healthcare that have been implemented in the participating countries, analyses them and draws general conclusions for policy development.

This report is meant to contribute substantially to effective policy development at national level, by providing decision makers with examples, tools and methodologies to better understand the status and evolution of key dimensions of quality, and therefore to take decisions that are based on more solid evidence.

The content of the report is based on the exchange of experiences and knowledge among countries and with international organisations. The Expert Group decided to keep the framework developed by the OECD for assessing quality of care as a general reference point. However, the Expert Group has not embraced a unique, binding definition of quality of care. Instead, every country presented its experiences according to the definition of quality of care which was implicitly or explicitly adopted at national level.

In the conclusions of the report, the experts note that most countries in Europe have strategies of performance measurement that are aimed at improving quality of healthcare services; these strategies normally include sets of indicators that are measured over time.

The Expert Group acknowledged an increasing interest in evidence-based assessment to promote accountability and transparency, in particular in the delivery of health services. This approach reflects a desired shift in focus towards health outcomes and an increased focus on the patient.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/systems_performance_assessment/docs/sowhat_en.pdf