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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**
meeting on 8 December 2016
State of Health in the EU
– *Information from the Commission*
(Any Other Business item)

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

State of Health in the EU

Strengthening evidence-based policy making is more important than ever, to rationalise public expenditure and to ensure the effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of health systems, so as to support Member States in promoting good health and in providing appropriate healthcare to their citizens. An exchange of best practice is important in an area with so many different policy options and budgetary constraints. The Commission supports Member States in their evidence-based policy making and will promote best practice exchange through the State of Health in the EU cycle.

Bringing renowned expertise together to strengthen Member States' evidence-base

Member States are responsible for the definition of health policy and for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care. While country differences are significant, all health systems across the EU are under unprecedented pressure to evolve, modernise and adapt to an ever-changing environment, be it because of technological developments, changing epidemiology, population ageing, financial constraints or patient engagement.

The State of Health in the EU is a two-year series of analytical products on country-specific and cross-country knowledge in the field of health. With it, the Commission brings together internationally recognised expertise and provides Member States with the evidence relevant to their specific context, without judging on their comparative performance. The State of Health in the EU builds on a renewed, synergetic partnership between the Commission, the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (hereafter the Observatory).

With the launch of 'Health at a Glance: Europe 2016' in November 2016, the Commission kicks off its first State of Health in the EU cycle. This will be followed by twenty-eight country health profiles and an accompanying Commission analysis. The State of Health in the EU cycle – a Commission initiative in close cooperation with the OECD and the Observatory – supports Member States in strengthening their evidence-based policy making. As such, the State of Health in the EU seeks to contribute to the broader reflection on helping Member States to provide modern, responsive and sustainable health systems as noted by the Council in its conclusions of 10 December 2013.¹

Health at a Glance: Europe 2016 kicks off the State of Health in the EU cycle

The report is aligned to the three objectives of the 2014 Communication on effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of health systems². The report covers the most recent trends on health and health systems across Member States and the most recent comparative data. It also includes two chapters on the labour market impacts of ill-health, and the strengthening of primary care systems.

"Health at a Glance: Europe 2016" illustrates wide country discrepancies in both expenditure and outcomes. This suggests that rather than investing more, Member States may have to invest better. The remainder of the State of Health in the EU cycle will provide complementary country-specific information required for a comprehensive exchange of best practice that takes into account each Member State's specific context.

November 2017: twenty-eight country profiles accompanied by a Commission paper

The second component of the cycle, foreseen for November 2017, will be a set of twenty-eight individual country health profiles developed by the OECD and the Observatory in cooperation with the Commission. These documents will provide complementary data and indicators, and emphasise the characteristics and challenges of each Member State.

The Commission, OECD and Observatory have just concluded a pilot phase for the country health profiles to test the format, presentation and scope of the profiles, which will balance a standard template and set of core indicators with a more tailor-made, country-specific approach.

¹ Council (EPSCO) conclusions on the "Reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems", 10 December 2013.

² COM(2014)215 Final of 4 April 2014.

The country health profiles will be accompanied in November 2017 by a Commission paper, the third component of the State of Health in the EU cycle. This factual, analytical paper will put at the service of Member States a succinct overview of the profiles, as well as an assessment of a small number of cross-cutting topics that link to common health policy priorities across the EU and reveal potential for EU value added.

An exchange of best practice at the close of the State of Health in the EU cycle

The fourth and final component of the cycle is the opportunity for an exchange of best practice that Member States can request, to discuss concrete aspects of their respective country situation. These exchanges, with the Commission, the OECD and the Observatory, will be done on the basis of the State of Health in the EU findings, and will help Member States to use the gathered evidence if they wish to do so.

Exploiting synergies and avoiding administrative burden

The State of Health in the EU exercise is conducted in full transparency with Member States, and will not impose an additional administrative requirement or reporting obligation on them: the Commission, the OECD and the Observatory will use already existing health information to provide a factual and objective analysis. Furthermore, the State of Health in the EU will build on the pooled expertise generated by other Commission products, such as, for instance, the Commission/Economic Policy Committee Joint Report on Health Care and Long-Term Care Systems & Fiscal Sustainability³.

³ Council (ECOFIN) conclusions on EPC- Commission Joint Report on health care and long-term care in the EU, 8 November 2016, ST 14182/16.