



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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6576/14

**SAN 77
SOC 122**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

from: General Secretariat of the Council

to: Delegations

Subject Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level on 18 February 2014

INTRODUCTION

The 12th meeting of the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL) held since the adoption of the Council Conclusions on the Implementation of the EU Health Strategy¹ was chaired by Ms Christina Papanikolaou, Secretary General for Public Health, Ministry of Health, Greece.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The provisional agenda for the meeting² was adopted. There were seven items on the agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Intervention of the Chair of the Social Protection Committee (SPC)
3. Reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems
 - 3.1 “Cost-effective use of medicines”

¹ 16139/08

² 1345/1/14 REV 1

- 3.2 “Measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of health investments”
- 3.3 Follow-up to the Council conclusions on the reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems

4. Informal meetings of EU Ministers of Health
5. The EU Health Strategy: update on activities and developments related to the EU Health Strategy
6. The role of the EU in international health fora
7. Other business

2. INTERVENTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE (SPC)

The Vice-Chair of the SPC, Ms Muriel Rabau, addressed the WPPHSL on the issue of cooperation between the two bodies in line with the recommendations set out in the Council conclusions on the reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems³ adopted on 10 December 2013. Ms Rabau said that such strengthened cooperation between the SPC and WPPHSL, including regular joint meetings, would be mutually beneficial and would help to ensure a greater role for health in the European Semester process.

She referred to the letter to the WPPHSL Chair from the Chair of the SPC proposing a joint SPC-WPPHSL multilateral implementation review (MIR) of the health and long-term care recommendations issued by the Council in July 2013, to be carried out on 10 April 2014, and the regular review of the Joint Assessment Framework on health prepared by the SPC Indicators Sub-Group. The WPPHSL delegates were also invited to take part in the Peer Review to be hosted by Belgium on 20-21 May 2014 in the context of the Open Method of Coordination, which would examine theoretical frameworks of Health System Performance Assessment (HSPA) and allow for mutual exchanges of information between the Member States.

The Chair thanked Ms Rabau for her statement, saying that cooperation with the SPC would be discussed under agenda item 3.3.

³ 16570/13

3. REFLECTION PROCESS ON MODERN, RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEMS

The Chair introduced the item, emphasising the work that had already been carried out by all five sub-groups in the framework of the reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems.

3.1 “COST-EFFECTIVE USE OF MEDICINES”

The co-coordinator of **sub-group 3** on Cost-Effective Use of Medicines (Netherlands) presented the report⁴. The report focused on the external reference pricing of medicinal products and the policy mix for the reimbursement of medicinal products.

The Commission welcomed the timely debate on these very important subjects, underlining the need to develop a common methodology using the sub-group as a platform. The Commission expressed its readiness to hold discussions on a modernised regulatory approach with regard to pharmaceuticals.

The WPPHSL expressed its appreciation for the work accomplished by the sub-group. It stressed that the subject was very important, but also very complex, with MS having very different systems in place. Further discussion, exchange of information and best practice should be encouraged. Some delegations called for a clear mandate to be defined for the future work of the sub-group, to ensure added value .

The Chair thanked the coordinator, the participating Member States and the European Commission for their valuable contributions.

The Chair concluded that:

- WPPHSL took note of the report by sub-group 3;
- there was no agreement on continuing the work of this sub-group or setting up a new sub-group. However, there was broad consensus for continuing discussions on this issue while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and ensuring that there was no overlap with other activities, such as the HTA Network or the Pharmaceuticals Committee. Emphasis was also laid on the political aspect of this discussion and the need for the ministers’ involvement in such a political issue.

⁴ 5736/14

3.2 “MEASURING AND MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALTH INVESTMENTS”

The co-coordinator of sub-group 5 on Measuring and Monitoring the Effectiveness of Health Investments (Sweden) presented the report⁵ and its main recommendations.

The sub-group proposed that there should be a follow-up to its work in order to improve policy usefulness, coordination and exchange of best practices at EU level in the field of Health System Performance Assessment (HSPA). It invited the WPPHSL to consider the option of an expert group that could be set up by the Commission and in which all Member States would be invited to take part. Sweden, as the coordinator of the sub-group, would be willing to chair the work of such an expert group, together with the European Commission. It was suggested that the Commission could prepare the terms of reference for an expert group and present them to the next meeting of the Council Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level.

The Commission welcomed the idea of developing HSPA at EU level as a very useful tool, in conjunction with ongoing efforts at both national and international (WHO, OECD) level in order to avoid duplication of work.

It was concluded that it was important to continue discussions on HSPA and that cooperation with the Social Protection Committee should continue. Before establishing a new expert group, the work of existing expert groups should be taken into account. It was suggested that the Commission should provide a list of existing expert groups and other bodies in the area of health along with their terms of reference.

The Chair invited the Commission to provide the Member States with the above-mentioned list and prepare the terms of reference for the proposed expert group, to be discussed at the next WPPHSL meeting.

⁵ 5737/14

3.3 FOLLOW-UP TO THE COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE REFLECTION PROCESS ON MODERN, RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEMS

The Chair introduced the item, emphasising the progress already achieved in the framework of the reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems, and invited delegations to comment on the issue of strengthening cooperation with the SPC (in the context of the letter to the WPPHSL Chair from the Chair of the SPC), including practical arrangements for such cooperation, especially in the context of putting health higher on the European Semester agenda.

The Commission outlined the mechanisms of the European Semester process.

The Vice-Chair of the SPC reiterated the message she had expressed earlier in the day, stressing the mutual benefits that cooperation between the SPC and WPPHSL could bring.

The delegations were generally positive about the idea of strengthening cooperation with the SPC. Some delegations suggested setting up a new sub-group within the SPC, dedicated to health issues, but there was not enough support for this idea. It was agreed that the arrangements for such cooperation should be clearly defined and should go beyond cooperation in the context of the European Semester.

Some delegations mentioned that forms of cooperation with the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) should also be considered.

With regard to other aspects of the reflection process, some delegations supported further work on efficiency of health instruments and more flexible use of the structural funds in the area of health.

There was general agreement that the health ministers should have a more prominent role in the European Semester process, and that health-related European Semester issues should be included in the "health section" of the EPSCO Council's agenda.

The Chair concluded that she would send a positive response to the letter from the SPC Chair and that the practical aspects of cooperation with the SPC would need to be examined at a later stage.

4. INFORMAL MEETINGS OF EU HEALTH MINISTERS

The Chair thanked the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands for their initiative and input in the discussion on how to make the informal meetings of EU health ministers more efficient.

The delegations stressed that the question of adequate representation and sustainable outcomes of the informal meetings was crucial. Some delegations suggested that there was a need for coordination and longer-term strategic direction, and that the WPPHSL might have a role in preparations and follow-up to the informal meetings.

The WPPHSL took note of the paper on the above-mentioned subject submitted by the Presidency. The Chair underlined that there was potential for positive involvement of the WPPHSL in this area.

5. THE EU HEALTH STRATEGY: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE EU HEALTH STRATEGY

The Commission reported on recent and forthcoming developments in the EU Health Policy, namely on:

- the legislative files (Tobacco Products Directive, Clinical Trials, EMA fees for the conduct of pharmacovigilance activities, Medical Devices);
- cooperation on Health Determinants, Major and Chronic Diseases, Health Threats, Health Information, Health Systems, eHealth and EIP on Active and Healthy Ageing;
- financing (Joint Actions, Health Programme, Health in Horizon 2020, Health and Structural Funds 2014-2020).

The WPPHSL took note of this oral information from the Commission.

6. THE ROLE OF THE EU IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH FORA

The Presidency gave a debriefing on the 134th session of the WHO Executive Board (EB) held in Geneva from 20 to 25 January 2014, the 67th World Health Assembly planned for 19 to 24 May 2014, and the representation of the EU Member States in WHO Governing bodies both at global and regional level. Particular attention was paid to two major global processes

on health during 2014: examination of the progress achieved at global level on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and the issue of health in the post-2015 landscape [in the context of revisiting the priorities after the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)].

Some delegations expressed concerns over the growing length of the WHO EB agendas and called for them to be rationalised. Several delegations (SV, FR, NL) confirmed that they would field candidates for the WHO EB.

The WPPHSL took note of the information, and thanked the Presidency for its very efficient coordination in this field.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

The Spanish delegation informed the WPPHSL of developments concerning the Joint Action on chronic diseases and promoting healthy ageing across the life cycle (CHRODIS-JA) under the 2013 work plan of the programme of Community action in the field of health (2008-13), and invited the MS to cooperate in the framework of this JA.