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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 2017
State of Health in the EU
– *Information from the Commission*
(Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject to be raised under "Any Other Business" at the session of the Council (EPSCO) on 8 December 2017.

State of Health in the EU

Strengthening evidence-based policy making can help to improve policy decisions to promote good health, to rationalise public expenditure and to ensure the effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of health systems. Exchanging good practice is important in an area with many different policy options and budgetary constraints. The Commission supports Member States in their evidence-based policy making and promotes best practice exchange through the State of Health in the EU cycle.

On 23 November 2017, the Commission published the most important deliverables of the State of Health in the EU cycle of knowledge brokering: twenty-eight country health profiles alongside their Companion Report. The country health profiles were prepared by the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, in cooperation with the Commission. The Companion Report contains the Commission's own analysis of cross-cutting topics and their EU added-value. Member States now have the opportunity to follow up on the country-specific and cross-EU knowledge by requesting a voluntary exchange with the experts behind the material.

Supporting Member States with an expert-driven, high quality evidence-base

The *State of Health in the EU*¹ comprises the Health at a Glance: Europe 2016 report presented last year, the country health profiles, and the Companion Report, containing a wealth of cross-EU and country-specific knowledge.

This two-year cycle of knowledge brokering is built on a trilateral partnership between the Commission, the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. The collaboration means that the *State of Health in the EU* is driven by external, internationally renowned expertise, with the additional benefit of eliminating duplication between the organisations.

¹ Further information is available as of 23 November at: ec.europa.eu/health/state.

The findings support policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners by providing a reliable, high-quality evidence-base in a concise package. This enables mutual learning and exchange of good practice. The expert-driven exercise is designed to inform and support Member States' decision making, not to make recommendations. The *State of Health in the EU* cycle is aligned to the 2014 Commission Communication on effective, accessible and resilient health systems².

For the Commission itself, the *State of Health in the EU* will, in turn, support other policy processes, for instance contributing to the European Semester with sound evidence that is sensitive to each country's context.

Twenty-eight country health profiles shed light on health systems across the EU

The country health profiles, prepared by the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, in cooperation with the Commission, are the mainstay of the *State of Health in the EU*. Whereas last year's *Health at a Glance: Europe 2016* provided the horizontal, cross-country starting point to the two-year cycle, the profiles comprise a more vertical, country-specific assessment of each health system.

The country health profiles provide a snapshot of a population's health status; the situation as regards key risk factors to prevent chronic diseases; a succinct description of a country's health system and a brief assessment of its performance in terms of effectiveness, accessibility and resilience. While the profiles are built on a consistent structure and methodology, each profile is specifically adapted to the respective Member State.

In these twenty-eight brief reports, Member States are not ranked according to their overall performance, but rather assessed within each country's specific context. And though overall performance does indeed vary widely, each Member State reveals its own strengths and challenges.

² COM(2014)215 Final of 4 April 2014

The Commission's Companion Report draws the key conclusions from the analysis

The Companion Report draws some cross-cutting conclusions from the twenty-eight profiles. These link to shared policy objectives across the Member States, and reveal potential for EU value added.

It comprises two parts:

- The first part deals with a few themes that are prominent across the profiles: (1) the shift towards health promotion and disease prevention; (2) a stronger role for primary care; (3) a rethink of the generally fragmented service delivery; (4) proactive planning and forecasting in the health workforce; and (5) better patient-centred data across the EU.
- The second part features the key findings as taken directly from the profiles by the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.

An opportunity for mutual learning at the close of the State of Health in the EU cycle

Member States across the EU have the option to use the *State of Health in the EU* cycle knowledge in voluntary exchanges which are organised by OECD and Observatory experts, in cooperation with the Commission, to allow for a follow-up dialogue at national level if deemed useful. The voluntary exchange will be an opportunity for a Member State, or a small group of Member States, to explore issues highlighted in the respective country health profile(s) and the Companion Report, also picking up issues from *Health at a Glance: Europe 2016*.

The voluntary exchanges will be designed to share evidence and create genuine interactions that could support national policy action. The scope, content and format of each voluntary exchange will be tailored to the specific needs and preferences identified in the request. It could take the shape of, for instance, a seminar, workshop, symposium or policy dialogue. The *State of Health in the EU's* voluntary exchanges will take place over the course of 2018.