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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**
session on 22 June 2018
Outcomes of conferences organised by the Bulgarian Presidency
– *Information from the Presidency*
(Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject to be raised under "Any Other Business" at the session of the Council (EPSCO) on 22 June 2018.

OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCES ORGANISED BY
THE BULGARIAN PRESIDENCY

The main health priorities during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU were **healthy nutrition for children** and **access to effective and affordable medicines**. The Presidency organised two conferences which were supported by the European Commission and brought together experts at national, European and international level.

The Conference on 'The Healthy Future of Europe: Healthy Nutrition for Children' took place on 6 February 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria. It brought together health and agriculture experts from the EU Member States, the WHO, UNICEF, academic circles and non-governmental organisations. Key messages from the conference focused on the relationship between food and chronic diseases, the need to ensure a proper environment, including in terms of increased availability of healthy options, the importance of traditional diets and products, as well as the need to limit the exposure of children to marketing. Children and young people are not only a highly vulnerable group of consumers, but they also have the potential to ensure that Europe continues to be a benchmark for a healthy population in the future.

The discussions inspired the topics selected for the Informal Council of Health Ministers, which took place on 22-23 April 2018 in Sofia. This provided the necessary input for the preparation of the draft Council Conclusions on Healthy Nutrition for Children: The Healthy Future of Europe.

A conference in another important area – pharmaceutical products – took place on 6 March 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria. At the **Conference on 'Health as the Real Winner: Presidency Conference on Options to Provide Better Medicines for All'**, experts debated topics such as parallel exports, accelerated marketing approvals and patient safety, affordability, effectiveness and the need to ensure the sustainability of health systems that could cater to patients' requirements. The European Commission, the WHO, prominent national authorities from different Member States, and representatives of the innovative and generic European industries all contributed to the constructive discussions. One of the panels discussed how to successfully justify restrictions on parallel trade

through improved understanding of the proportionality requirement. Putting emphasis on the quality of clinical data rather than on accelerating the speed of marketing authorisation was another key message which emerged from the discussions. In terms of solutions, the focus was on the need to ensure that the framework and the rules stimulate the kind of innovation which meets the needs of the population and is affordable. Particular emphasis was placed on the incentives available in the EU, the key role of the strict implementation of EU competition rules, as well as transparency regarding the costs behind prices.

The debate on these topics continued during the Informal Council on Health Ministers, which took place on 22-23 April 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria, when delegations discussed shortages of medicines due to economic reasons, effectiveness, affordability and availability, including parallel exports.

The Presidency also supported **a workshop**, which took place in Sofia on 17 May 2018, **on effective investments in health with European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)**. The particular topic was health workforce planning and programming. The workshop was part of the 'ESI Funds for Health' project financed by the EU Health Programme¹, which aims to gather knowledge and support the capacities of Member States and regions to help ensure the effective implementation of the ESIF for health. Five other workshops are to take place between May and September 2018 and the project will conclude with a high-level conference in December 2018.

The events supported by the Third Health Programme contributed to the Bulgarian Presidency's overall goal of demonstrating the clear added value of cooperation and exchanges between Member States in the area of health.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/funding/programme_en