



Health & Consumer Voice

January 2010

Headline News

Spain takes over EU Council
Presidency_____1

Parliamentary hearing of
Commissioner-Designate Dalli_____1

Top Stories

Commission paper tackles anti-
microbial resistance_____2

Maclaran to provide hinge cover safety
kits for European consumers_____3

Eradication, monitoring and control of
animal diseases_____3

EC tops a billion Euros invested in the
fight against AIDS_____4

In brief

EMA first weekly pandemic
pharmacovigilance update_____2

International Day of People with
Disability_____3

Health Programme: new complete
project database_____3

Commission launches the online vote
on the new EU organic logo_____4

Spain takes over EU Council Presidency

On 1 January 2010, Spain will take over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first half of the year.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the appointment of the new Commission, the Spanish Presidency will be taking place at a challenging time. While the main focus of the Presidency will be on the Lisbon Treaty and on an exit strategy from the financial crisis, Spain is also expected to take a strong interest in the area of health, food and consumers.

Concerning health, the Presidency will focus on reducing inequalities in health, on organ donation and transplantation and on eHealth. High-level conferences will be organised on all of these topics. Spain will also seek an agreement on the Commission's proposal for a Direc-



tive on Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare and on the Commission's proposals that make up the pharmaceutical package.

In the area of food, the Presidency will pay particular attention to the Commission's proposals for a Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and for a Regulation on novel food. Issues surrounding healthy eating and the fight against obesity will also be promoted.

Finally, Spain will be seeking a successful conclusion to the revision of the Pet Regulation and will aim to make progress on the safety of consumer products.

For further information please see:

<http://www.eutrio.es/en/presidencia/>

Parliamentary hearing of Commissioner-Designate Dalli

The parliamentary hearing of the Commissioner-Designate for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, is to take place on 14 January at 13.00hrs under the lead of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, with MEPs from the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and Agriculture and Rural Development Committees also attending.

He will answer questions from MEPs

to assess his abilities, particularly regarding issues covering his portfolio. The parliament's President and political group leaders will examine the results of the hearing. The debate and vote on the new Commission is expected to take place at an extraordinary plenary session on 26 January. The hearing will be webstreamed on the Parliament's website.

For further information please see:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>



In brief



EMA first weekly pandemic pharmacovigilance update

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has published on 3 December 2009 the first in a series of weekly pandemic pharmacovigilance updates.

These weekly bulletins will provide information on adverse reactions reported after the use of centrally authorised pandemic influenza vaccines and antivirals in the European Union, and complement the information the Agency has been publishing regularly on the development and approval of medicines for use during the pandemic.

This information will support European institutions and Member States in their communications, and provide an additional resource when recommending the use of vaccines and antiviral treatments.

The information on adverse reactions in the update comes from EudraVigilance, the central European database on adverse reactions, managed by the Agency. It is based on reports from Member States and marketing authorisation holders.

The weekly update also provides an estimate of how many doses of pandemic vaccines and antivirals have been administered in the European Union, and other information that helps put adverse reaction reports in context.

The first update is available at:

<http://www.emea.europa.eu/pdfs/influenza/78468109en.pdf>

For further information, please see:

<http://www.emea.europa.eu>



Commission paper tackles anti-microbial resistance

The European Commission has recently presented a staff working paper that aims to be the basis of discussion on the ways to better tackle the problem of anti-microbial resistance (AMR). The Commission's document provides an overview of the activities already undertaken by the European Union to address the AMR problem and identifies areas where further reflection could help the efforts to come up with solutions.

Antimicrobials are essential as medicines for human and animal health welfare and as disinfectants, antiseptics and hygiene products. Since their discovery they have substantially decreased the threat posed by various infectious diseases.

However, over the years microbes have evolved and have become resistant to some of the antimicrobial medicines. Microbial resistance is now most evident in hospital-acquired infections, respiratory tract infections, meningitis, diarrhoeal diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Resistant microbes or resistance determinants may be transferred from animals to humans via the food chain or through direct contact.

Since the 1990s, when AMR was recognised as a serious threat to public health, the Commission has launched different initiatives and has developed tools to monitor the effect of these actions. In June 2008 the Health Council adopted conclusions on AMR, calling the Commission to promote mutual cooperation between all Directorates General and concerned Agencies and to facilitate cooperation between the Member States on aspects of AMR.

This working paper outlines now the EU actions in terms of monitoring AMR and highlights the complexity of AMR, linked to public health, con-

trol/eradication of zoonoses, animal health and welfare, research activities, etc.

In the area of human medicine the paper points out that the Commission has funded several European monitoring projects that provided valuable and comparable data on the burden of disease and resistance across Europe. In the field of food safety and veterinary medicine the use of antimicrobial veterinary products is prohibited by Community legislation as a specific method to control salmonella in poultry and tuberculosis in cattle.

In the area of risk management for human medicine, the Commission welcomes reflections on the adoption of strategies and action plans and on the establishment of inter-sectorial coordinating mechanisms in all Member States. As to zoonoses control, reflections are welcome on ways to ensure the prudent use of antimicrobials in animal husbandry and on targeted interventions that would concern rules on the absence of resistant zoonotic agents in food.

In terms of monitoring activities in human medicine, the paper notes that thought could be given to the improvement of the surveillance system for AMR and of access to data and information.

The paper also deals with communication issues and notes that ideas would be welcome on how to further educate the general public on AMR and on how to improve the awareness, education and training of health professionals in human and veterinary medicine.

The text of the staff working paper can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/salmonella/antimicrobial_resistance.pdf

For further information please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/salmonella/index_en.htm

Maclaren to provide hinge cover safety kits for European consumers

After a meeting held in Brussels on 03 December 2009 with CEO of firm Maclaren US Farzad Rastegar, EU Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva welcomed the decision by Maclaren to provide all European consumers with hinge cover safety kits for pushchair buggies, on request. From 2010, all new pushchairs will have hinge covers as a standard accessory.

"There can be no compromise on safety. The statement from Maclaren responds to the concerns of many anxious parents across Europe, who have quite rightly been asking questions in recent weeks. This decision by Maclaren will give consumers across Europe the peace of mind and high safety standards they deserve", Commissioner Kuneva said.

On November 9 2009, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with the firm Maclaren, had announced a voluntary

corrective action. The announcement from the CPC stated that the stroller's hinge mechanism poses a fingertip amputation and laceration risk to the child when the consumer is unfolding/opening the stroller. The action involved all Maclaren single and double umbrella strollers. Nearly one million Maclaren pushchairs were "recalled" in the US.

Consumers should immediately stop using these recalled strollers and contact Maclaren USA to receive a free repair kit.

In a statement, Maclaren Europe Limited said its products had been assessed and were safe. It added: "We wish to reassure our customers that they should continue to use their existing Maclaren buggies since they are safe when opened and closed correctly".

The letter from Maclaren to Commissioner Kuneva announcing the decision is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/docs/maclaren_decision_en.pdf

Eradication, monitoring and control of animal diseases

The European Commission has adopted a financial package of €275 million to support programmes to eradicate, control and monitor animal diseases in 2010. The 224 annual or multi-annual programmes which were selected for EU funding will tackle animal diseases that impact both human and animal health. The large EU contribution towards these programmes reflects the high level of importance attached to disease eradication measures, for the protection of both animal and public health.

Each year the Commission approves programmes for the eradication and monitoring of animal diseases, for the control of zoonoses such as



salmonella, for the monitoring and eradication of TSEs and for avian influenza surveillance. These approved programmes receive financial contributions from the EU.

For 2010, 224 eradication, control and monitoring programmes for animal diseases and zoonoses, for which Member States wish to receive a financial contribution from the Community, have been approved.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/eradication/legisl_en.htm

In brief



International Day of People with Disability

On 3 December, like every year, the International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) was celebrated worldwide, recognising the achievements and contributions of people with disability.

International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) is a United Nations sanctioned day that aims to promote an understanding of people with disability and encourage support for their dignity, rights and well-being.

IDPwD brings together people with disability and the general community and aims to:

- showcase the skills, abilities, contributions and achievements of people with disability;
- promote a positive image of people with disability;
- involve people with disability and the broader community in activities to celebrate and raise awareness of IDPwD.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.idpwd.com.au/index.asp>

Health Programme: new complete project database

A database is now available providing all the projects co-funded by the Commission under the first and second Health Programme.

This includes information about projects, conferences and operating grants funded through calls for proposals in the years from 2003 to 2008.

The database is available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/projects/database.html>



EC tops a billion Euros invested in the fight against AIDS

Not too far from World AIDS Day, the European Commission can announce that it has invested over one billion Euros in the fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As a founding member of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the European Commission has to date pledged €1,072.5 million covering the period 2002-2010 and has recently made new policy commitments to do more, better, together.

According to the latest figures, new HIV infections have been reduced by 17% over the past eight years and the most progress is seen in sub-Saharan Africa. However, worldwide the number of people living with HIV now reaches 33 million, with the fastest spread of the epidemic occurring on the threshold of the European Union, in the neighbouring countries of Eastern Europe.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, almost 60 million people have been infected with HIV and 25 million people have died of AIDS related causes.

Although important progress has been achieved in preventing new HIV infections and in lowering the annual number of AIDS-related deaths, AIDS continues to be a major global health priority. In 2008, 2.7 million people became newly infected, and 2 million people died from AIDS-related causes.

The epidemic appears to have stabilized in most regions, although prevalence continues to increase in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and in other parts of Asia, due to a high rate of new infections. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most heavily affected region, accounting for 71% of all new HIV infections in 2008.

European Commission Action:

- As the world's largest donor, the EU has collectively provided the majority of the significant increase in recent years of international financing earmarked for HIV/AIDS;

- EU contributions to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have almost quadrupled, from \$403 million in 2003 to \$1,546 million, representing around 55% of world contributions in the years 2004-2008;

- The EU Member States and the European Commission have a common programme for action and decided together to call for stronger, more effective and more concerted efforts through External Action (2007-2011);

- The Commission is increasingly channelling its funds available through budget support to strengthen health systems, as one of the main ways to confront AIDS. This new instrument is thought to be particularly beneficial for health systems, providing longer-term and predictable financing;

- Budget support has increased from €1,425 million for 2002-2006 to €2,571 million for 2007-2011;

- The Commission has also adopted a new Communication (26 October 2009) on combating HIV/AIDS in the European Union and neighbouring countries for 2009 -2013, with the view of addressing the unfortunate trend of increasing infections in Europe. It focuses in particular on the promotion of prevention and on the implementation of measures targeting most at risk groups and particular geographical areas mostly affected by HIV/AIDS.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/com/aids/aids_en.htm

In brief



Commission launches the online vote on the new EU organic logo

In July 2010 a new EU logo for organic products will be introduced throughout the European Union. Contrary to the existing EU organic logo, which can be used voluntarily, the use of the new logo will be compulsory for all pre-packaged organic products that originate in the 27 Member States.

The new logo will indicate to European consumers that the organic product has achieved a specified level of quality which is standard throughout the entire EU. The logo ensures that the products it appears on are organic – from the farm to the fork.

All EU design or art students are invited to submit their most innovative designs to the competition for the new organic logo. Participants must be registered at an academy, university or college in one of the 27 EU Member States. The entries must be submitted by 25 June 2009.

A jury of leading design professionals and organic farming experts will make the initial shortlist of entries, which will then be showcased on this website. Through an online vote, the European public will then choose their favourite logo.

Contributing to the European organic movement is just one great reason to vote for the new EU Organic Logo. Supporters of organic farming believe in sustainable agricultural practices that benefit the earth and the life forms on it. Along with promoting environmental quality for generations to come, organic food is simply good for nature and good for consumers.

By voting for your favourite logo, you appreciate the work of over 3400 design students from throughout the EU Member States and can make your voice heard in Europe. The choice is yours!

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/logo/voting/voting_en.htm



The views expressed in Health & Consumer Voice do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

© European Union, 2010. Reproduction of articles (excluding photographs) is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is mentioned.

Chief Editor: Eric Thévenard.

Editors: Rosita Scanferla, in cooperation with the EC Health and Consumers DG.

Layout: Rosita Scanferla.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm
Email: sanco-newsletter@ec.europa.eu