



# Health & Consumer Voice

October 2010

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## Towards a new plant health law

An important conference co-organised by the Belgian Presidency and the Commission took place in Brussels on 28 September. The conference marked an important step in the review of the Plant Health Regime, with a view to identifying possible reform measures to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.



The importance of plant health is often underestimated. It is, however, a cornerstone of sustainable agriculture, global food security and environmental protection. It is also a public good in its own right. Indigenous pests and diseases already pose significant problems, but our crops, plants and forests are particularly vulnerable to foreign invaders - pests to which they have little or no natural resistance. This perennial problem is exacerbated by the globalisation of trade, and of course by climate change.

the current regime. The new plant health law will step up prevention, surveillance and rapid action upon outbreaks. It will reinforce the plant passport system for intra-EU movements of plant materials and improve the protected zone system. New ideas for discussion will include a new balance between Member States and private operators as regards responsibility and cost sharing; possible synergies with the EU regime for seeds and propagating material; and a possible plant health fund to cover the losses of growers following imposed plant health measures.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/strategy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/strategy/index_en.htm)

The conference took as its basis a recently completed evaluation of

## Developing public health capacity in the EU

Reviewing the current public health capacity in Europe and making recommendations for EU action to develop and implement public health policies is the aim of a project supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers and the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC).

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers and the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) contracted a consortium of different European public health organisations to review the current public health capacity in Europe. The consortium is asked to:



## In brief



### EC report on reprocessing of single-use medical devices

On 27 August the European Commission adopted a report on the reprocessing of medical devices in the European Union. The report looks in particular at the practice of reprocessing of medical devices which are intended for single use, such as needles, syringes or catheters. The practice is not currently regulated at EU level.

Earlier, the Commission had asked for an independent scientific opinion on the issue. On this basis the report concludes that the reprocessing practice may not be without risks. The Commission will assess how the current EU law on medical devices can be reviewed to ensure a high level of protection for the patients.

To read the full report, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/sectors/medical-devices/files/pdfdocs/reprocessing\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/sectors/medical-devices/files/pdfdocs/reprocessing_report_en.pdf)

### EU Public Health Indicators: new version of ECHI tool now available

EU health indicators are sets of data providing information on health status, determinants and care in EU member countries. They allow for monitoring and comparison, and serve as a basis for policymaking.

These indicators are now available in a revised and improved web-tool. You will now be able to view and download the core indicators as dynamic graphs, maps and tables covering all EU countries and stratified by age and gender.

The ECHI and its follow-up ECHIM (European Community Health Indicators Monitoring) are projects co-financed by the EU's Health Programme.

To visit new ECHI-tool, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/indicators/indicators/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/indicators/indicators/index_en.htm)

- carry out a detailed review of the capacity of EU Member States to develop and implement public health policies and interventions;

- identify gaps, needs and common issues;

- offer suggestions for action where EU support (including programmes and instruments in other policy areas) could add value to strengthen public health capacities.

A mixed methodology will be used, involving document analysis, assessment tool/questionnaire, focus groups with key informants, in-depth case studies and consensus



building at country level. Findings will be endorsed by the Ministry of Health or the highest public health authority of the country in question.

The project started in January 2010 and the data collected from each country will be included in a database by the end of October. A final report including main findings, suggestions and recommendations for future actions will be submitted to the European Commission in 2011.

For further information, please see:

[http://www.eurohealthnet.eu./index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=206&Itemid=250](http://www.eurohealthnet.eu./index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=206&Itemid=250)

## Electronic goods sweep

On 16 September the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, announced the final results of the electronic goods sweep and the first results of a new sweep targeting events ticketing sites. 84% of websites selling electronic goods checked for breach of EU consumer rules now comply with EU laws (compared with only 44% in 2009).

Commissioner Dalli held a press conference to announce the enforcement results of the EU-wide 'sweep' investigation into breaches of EU consumer rules on websites selling popular electronic goods such as digital cameras and personal music players.

The original enquiry was carried out in 2009 by a network of national enforcers in 26 Member States, Norway and Iceland. The 2009

crackdown showed that only 45% of the sites checked complied with EU consumer laws. Since then, national authorities have followed up on suspected irregularities. It is expected that the enforcement results will show a very substantial improvement in compliance.

Mr. Dalli also presented the results of the first phase of a new sweep, targeting websites selling tickets to sports and cultural events.

For further information, please see:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1136&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## Ministerial Conference on chronic illnesses on 20 October

EU Member States are increasingly facing common challenges with the growing burden of chronic diseases in the European Union, representing 86% of mortality in the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region and having significant economic implications. Many of these diseases are preventable and are linked by common risk factors such as tobacco use, overweight and obesity, hypertension, alcohol abuse and sedentary lifestyle.

The Belgian Presidency of the European Union has decided to draw attention on this crucial issue by organising a Ministerial Conference on "Innovative approaches for chronic illnesses in public health and healthcare systems", scheduled for 20 October. Against a background of innovation and solidarity, this Ministerial Conference aims to bring Member States, patients and other relevant stakeholders together to discuss and share experiences and best practices in the field of chronic diseases. The perception of people living with chronic conditions by society and by patients themselves will be a central theme of the conference.

In the area of prevention, the discussion will address innovative initiatives to improve healthy lifestyles, cost-effective strategies and their implementation, and the importance of collaboration



of relevant stakeholders to tackle common risk factors in chronic diseases. In the area of care, the discussion will include: the role of new technologies to prevent hospital re-admissions and to improve the chronic patient's ability to live independently, the importance of integration of care and multidisciplinary cooperation to ensure optimal support for chronic patients, the importance of increased empowerment of patients and their role in care systems.

On 19 October two pre-events on musculoskeletal diseases and chronic respiratory diseases will be organised in collaboration with the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) and the European Respiratory Society (ERS). At both the conference and the pre-events, innovative, patient-oriented and collaborative initiatives in the area of prevention and care will be discussed.

Conclusions on chronic diseases will be presented to the EPSCO Council in December 2010.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.eutrio.be/calendar/2010-10-20/all?mini=calendar%2F2010-10%2Fall>

## EC key issues in nuclear medicine, radiology and radiotherapy

On 6 August the European Commission adopted a Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council on medical applications of ionizing radiation. Ionizing radiation

comprises particles and high energy electromagnetic radiation that are capable of disrupting the structure of atoms or molecules and change the structure of living cells.

### In brief



[European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being now available in 22 languages](#)

The European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being addresses Member States' governments, regional and local authorities, non governmental actors and civil society organisations whose decisions might have an impact on mental health policies.

The European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being is now available in 22 official languages of the EU.

To download the document in your favourite language, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental\\_health/docs/mhpact\\_zz.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental_health/docs/mhpact_zz.pdf)

[ICT 2010 - Digital Innovation Event](#)

The ICT 2010 event was held on 27-29 September at Brussels Expo, Heysel.

This biennial event has become a unique gathering point for researchers, business people, investors, and high level policy makers in the field of digital innovation. ICT 2010 focused on policy priorities such as Europe's Digital Agenda and the 2011-2012 financial programme (€2.8 billion) of the European Union for funding research and innovation in ICT.

ICT 2010 was aimed at discovering latest research trends in information and communication technologies, meeting potential research and business partners, and visiting the 10.000 m<sup>2</sup> exhibition of Europe's latest cutting edge ICT research.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/events/ict/2010/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/ict/2010/index_en.htm)



The document proposes a way forward to resolve the urgent issue of shortage of supply of radioisotopes for nuclear medicine. The Communication also identifies key issues to improve radiation protection of patients and medical staff, to avoid a rise in population exposure associated with the technological advances in X-ray computed tomography imaging (CT) and an increase of accidental or unintended exposures in radiotherapy. This Communication was jointly proposed by Günther Oettinger, Commissioner responsible for Energy, and by John Dalli, Commissioner responsible for Health and Consumer Policy.

Across the world, the number of X-ray examinations is around 4 billion per year. In Europe, around 9 million patients are treated each year with radioisotopes. It is the Commission's responsibility to help secure the availability of this technology to the benefit of human health. Today, the most widely used diagnostic radioisotope, Technetium-99m, is in short supply because it relies on an unsustainable low number of production reactors. Within the overall nuclear energy policy of the European Commission it is of crucial importance to provide incentives for further research reactors to contribute to its production and in the long term for new research reactors to be built for this purpose.

The Communication proposes a long term perspective on the medical application of ionizing radiation in the Union to stimulate discussions on the necessary actions, resources and distribution of responsibilities. In such a framework, the following actions are proposed:

- Strengthen the existing regulatory framework: the current legislation (Directive 97/43/Euratom) will be upgraded to enhance regulatory supervision to ensure that the legal requirements are respected. This will be part of an overall consolidation



of radiation protection legislation in 2011.

- Raise awareness and safety culture: the medical profession must receive adequate training and regular updates on good practice, and above all, made sensitive to its responsibility in ensuring both good medical care and adequate radiation protection. Awareness also needs to be raised among patients and among the general population.
- Foster radiation protection and a sustainable supply and use of radioisotopes through research: actions within the Euratom and EU Framework Programmes and in the framework of the Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform (SNETP) should contribute to the improvement of radiation protection and to the development of research infrastructures and competences.
- Financing mechanisms to ensure sustainable supply of radioisotopes: the Commission assesses different financing mechanisms to ensure a sustainable supply of radioisotopes in the interest of public health.
- Integration of policies: medical applications of ionizing radiation call for good integration of different policies, on public health, research, trade and industry as well as radiation protection.
- International cooperation: the World Health Organization (WHO) is very active in this area and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has built up important programmes and information tools. The Commission will support all initiatives for coordinated efforts.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/radiation\\_protection/radiation\\_protection\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/radiation_protection/radiation_protection_en.htm)

## In brief



### Consumer & Product Safety Day at Shanghai World Exposition 2010

The World Exposition 2010 is taking place in Shanghai, China from 1 May to 31 October on the theme "Better city, better life".

On 26 October the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers will host a one-day conference in this frame, entitled "How best to ensure safe purchases for consumers - The EU experience", focusing on modern consumer policy and guarantees of product safety in Europe.

The EU has set up a pavilion together with Belgium, and its exhibition is based around the theme of "Intelligent Europe", which takes in the sub-themes of "Open Europe", "Green Europe" and "Living Europe".

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers participates with some thematic events to highlight many key topics such as healthy cities, food safety, research for healthy life, etc.

The EU is China's main economic partner. The Expo is a unique opportunity to further develop diplomatic links with China and to present our policies and projects to thousands of key stakeholders.

The event also offers the chance to connect with millions of visitors, the vast majority of which will be Chinese and many of whom will be largely unfamiliar with the European Union and European culture.

For further information, please see:

<http://healthconsumeratshanghai.eu/events/better-consumers-rights-better-life>



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Chief Editor: Eric Thévenard.

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

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