



Europe for Patients

On 30 September 2008, the Commissioner for Health, **Ms Androulla Vassiliou** launched the 'Europe for Patients' campaign in Brussels. The campaign highlights the different health policy initiatives the Commission intends to adopt in the coming months.

All these initiatives are bound by a common goal: **better healthcare for all in Europe**. The initiatives and actions address patient safety, rare diseases, organ donation and transplantation, cancer screening, health workforce, flu and childhood vaccination and antibiotic use (see list at the end of this document). The first initiative under the campaign - the proposed Directive on cross border health care - was adopted by the Commission on 2 July 2008.

What is the aim of the campaign?

The aim is to provide a simple entry-point to the often complex world of EU healthcare policies and actions. "This is much more than a communication campaign – I call it a campaign driven by policy. The aim is to provide a tangible and readily understandable communication framework for the many different healthcare policies that we plan to adopt and undertake", Commissioner Vassiliou said.

The launch event and the logo

The launch event took place on 30 September in the presence of the French EU Presidency, Members of the European Parliament, national representatives, patients associations, journalists, health professionals and many other health organisations. The launch unveiled a logo for the Europe for Patients.

EU Health Journalist Prize

The Prize, launched in February 2009 as part of the Europe for Patients campaign, aims to highlight and reward work of a European journalist who has contributed in a significant way to help citizens understand health issues covered by the campaign.

How to find more information: dedicated website

A Europe for Patients **webpage** has been set up on the EU Health Portal in 22 languages. This is an information hub where information about the Europe for Patients initiatives is regularly up-dated, and where national and EU-level documents, articles and events are posted in relation to the initiatives.

Link to the website: <http://health.europa.eu/efp>.

Background: List of Initiatives in Europe for Patients Campaign

Cross-border healthcare

Rules for receiving cross-border healthcare and reimbursement of these costs are now not always clear or easy to understand. That is why the Commission adopted a proposal on 2 July 2008 for a legal instrument which will provide more clarity about possibilities to seek healthcare in another Member State. The proposal will also make clear who is responsible for quality and safety of care in cross-border settings. Finally it will strengthen cooperation in different areas, such as networks of centres of reference for specialised care, for example.

Initiative: Directive on the application of patients' rights in the cross-border healthcare.

Rare diseases

The objective of this Communication is to set out an overall Community strategy to support Member States in ensuring effective and efficient recognition, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care, and research for rare diseases in Europe. Patients will benefit from the sharing of the scarce resources that currently existing in the individual MS. This will be followed by a Council Recommendation under the Czech Presidency.

Initiative: Commission Communication and Council Recommendation on a European action in the field of rare diseases, adopted by the Commission on 11 November 2008

Organ donation and transplantation

Across Europe there is a shortage of human organs available for transplantation. To address this the Commission has proposed a combination of initiatives. First, some basic safety and quality principles and measures in relation to the donation and procurement of human organs. Secondly, the Commission has proposed an Action Plan with 10 priority actions to meet the challenges of organ donation and transplantation in the EU, through a mechanism that strengthens coordination between Member States

Initiatives:

- Proposal for a directive on setting standards of quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation (adopted 8 December 2008)
- Action Plan on Organ Donation and Transplantation (2009-2015) - Strengthened Cooperation between Member States (adopted 8 December 2008)

Health workforce

Progress on improving health and providing better access to healthcare for all cannot be made without a workforce of sufficient capacity and skills. The green paper raises the general issues and problems facing the workforce in health in the EU, suggests ways in which these issues may be addressed and poses a series of questions on which views are invited.

Initiative: Green paper on the European Workforce for Health, adopted 10 December 2008.

Patient Safety

Millions of EU patients are harmed by errors in healthcare, including from healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) each year. Some die as a result. Much of that harm is avoidable. The Commission has put forward a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on patient safety and quality of health services, addressing both general, systemic patient safety issues and specific measures to prevent and control HAIs.

Initiative: Commission Communication and Council Recommendation on patient safety and quality of health services including the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections (adopted by the Commission 15 December 2008)

Cancer:

Cancer Screening

Report on implementation of the Cancer Screening Recommendation of 2003. The Recommendation invites the European Commission to report on the implementation of cancer screening programmes, to consider the extent to which the proposed measures are working effectively, and to consider the need for further action. This is the first such report.

Initiative: Report on implementation of the Cancer Screening Recommendation of 2003, adopted 22 December 2008.

European Partnership for Action Against Cancer

The Commission aims to support the Member States in their efforts to tackle cancer by providing a framework for identifying and sharing information, capacity and expertise in cancer prevention and control, and by engaging relevant stakeholders across the European Union.

Initiative: Action against cancer: European Partnership

Flu vaccination

A key countermeasure for preventing influenza is vaccination. Current vaccine production capacity is not deemed to be sufficient to meet the demands of the Community in the event of a pandemic. The objective of the European Commission would be to increase the use of seasonal influenza vaccine, thus contributing to increasing manufacturing capacity.

Initiative: Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on seasonal flu vaccination

Prudent use of antibiotics

The Council recommendation 2002/77/EC on the prudent use of antimicrobial agents in human medicine requests from Member States and EEA countries to put in place specific strategies on prudent use of antimicrobial agents including measures in relation to surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and use, control and preventive measures, education and training, and research and to report to the Commission on its implementation.

Initiative: 2nd report from the Commission on the implementation of the Council recommendation.

Initiative:
European Antibiotic Awareness Day

The first-ever European Antibiotic Awareness Day took place across Europe on 18 November 2008. Managed by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Antibiotic Awareness Day will be an annual event that will raise awareness about the risks associated with inappropriate use of antibiotics and how to take antibiotics responsibly.

Mental health

The mental health pact agreed in the June 2008 High Level Conference will be followed by a series of thematic conferences focussed on the pact priorities, and by further actions highlighting EU added value in this area.

Initiative: First Thematic conference in 2009

Childhood vaccination

This initiative aims to establish a 'transit' immunisation schedule to facilitate a smooth transition from one national immunisation schedule to another and to seek a firm political commitment from Member States to step up efforts at increasing and maintaining a very high childhood vaccination coverage for priority diseases.

Initiative: Council recommendation on cross-border aspects of childhood immunisation

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