

EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM GASTEIN 2009

TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN EUROPE – EU POLICY & RESEARCH – CLOSING THE GAP

PARALLEL FORUMS 3 & 4

The size and scale of the differences in health of people living in different parts of the EU and between socially advantaged and disadvantaged EU citizens represents a challenge to the EU's commitment to solidarity and equality of opportunity. The European Commission, in a novel way over the course of two Parallel Forums at the European Health Forum Gastein 2009 event, will focus on the policy and research contexts of the health inequalities and the social determinants of health. This innovative approach will illustrate how the inequalities agenda is being taken up by different Commission services.

These Parallel Forums are hosted by European Commission services - DG Research and DG Health and Consumers.

FORUM 3 - SESSION I

WEDNESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER – 15h30 to 18h30

Working Title: Meeting the challenge of health inequalities in the EU

The European Commission announced a communication on reducing health inequalities in the EU in its work programme for 2009 as an initiative on "Solidarity in Health". Against the backdrop of the financial crisis, this first session will offer an opportunity to report on the EC initiative and response to the crisis. The session will serve to illustrate that the EC response is one that is integrated across other policy areas and levels of governance, with a focus on strengthening mechanisms and identifying areas for possible action. One important underlying element will be the report of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health published in August 2008.

An overview of Commission action on health inequalities will be given with a perspective from Member States, the European Parliament and key stakeholders, including an outline of the potential contribution of EU health, social and regional policies. A panel discussion will focus on the challenges and actions in tackling health inequalities in the EU over the next five years.

Chair: Robert Madelin
European Commission, DG Health & Consumers

Rapporteur: Jenny Telander, Young Gasteiner

Introduction and Outline: Robert Madelin

Sets out the main lines of action being taken forward by SANCO in relation to health inequalities referring to the Commission Communication on health inequalities foreseen for adoption at around this date. The EU can play a role in relation to:

- promoting the development and exchange of information and knowledge, a topic to be tackled in more details in session II and III on research,
- in orientating its own policies to better address health inequalities, to be considered in this session and also in session IV
- and in facilitating engagement by Member States and key stakeholders.

Presentation: Tackling health inequalities in and between Member States

The presentation will refer to a number of good examples of national, regional and local level actions addressing health inequalities in Spain in the context of recent intentions to renew its national strategy and the forthcoming Spanish presidency in 2010 which intends to prioritise the issue.

Speaker: Karoline Fernández de la Hoz, Spanish Ministry of Health

Presentation: What's needed to address health inequalities by gender and social group in Europe

Speaker: Brigitte Triems, European Women's Lobby

Presentation: Ways out of the crisis – what can the public do?

Speaker: Christoph Hörhan, Fonds Gesundes Österreich

Presentation: Regional strategies for tackling health inequalities

Speaker: Luigi Bertinato, Veneto Region

Discussion with the audience

COFFEE 17h00

PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderator: Robert Madelin

Panel Members: Speakers from above
Agnes Cser, Member of the Economic and Social Committee
Luiza Bara, European Public Health Alliance

FORUM 3 - SESSION II

THURSDAY 1ST OCTOBER – 9h00 to 12h00

Working Title: **Research on health inequalities in the EU – where are we, where do we want to go?**

One important underlying element in the debate in this context will be the report of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health published in August 2008 that demonstrated that inequalities in health outcomes are fundamentally related to overall social and living conditions and that tackling them requires a coordinated response across relevant policy areas – including research. The aim in these sessions is allow discussions on how the EU Framework Programme for Research can contribute to improving the knowledge base on the causes of health inequalities and the evidence base for action at the European level, giving shape to a concrete European research agenda.

An overview of the EU landscape of funded health research projects – both new and on-going - will be given together with actions supported by the EC public health programme, serving to highlight how EU research and actions generate evidence and add to the knowledge base for action and pinpoint gaps in knowledge and approaches. Certain projects will be invited to identify the relevance of their findings to health inequalities debate. A concluding panel will round up these sessions with the objective of identifying concrete elements for consideration in the preparation for the next FP7 call for proposals.

Chair: Robert Madelin
European Commission, DG Health & Consumers

Rapporteur: Taavi Lai, Young Gasteiner

Sir Michael Marmot, Chair of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants will kick off to set the scene and draw attention to the challenges to identify a research agenda. The objective is to then allow a strategic appreciation of the landscape of projects funded by European funding programmes – in particular the EC Framework Programmes for Research including the current 7th Framework Programme but also the Community actions in the field of health – the EC public health programmes. This will be followed by two presentations highlighting how projects can contribute to the development of health inequalities policy.

Welcome: Kevin McCarthy, European Commission, DG Research

Key Note Speech: Setting the scene and identifying the research agenda challenge

Speaker: Sir Michael Marmot, WHO Commission on Social Determinants

Presentations: The landscape of EC funded research and public health projects

The first presentation will provided for a strategic overview and deliberation of the EC landscape of funded health research projects under the framework programmes – both new and on-going – while the second will develop strategic reflections on Community actions supported by the EC public health programmes. These presentations will serve to illustrate how EC research and actions generate evidence and add to the knowledge base for action as well as serving to pinpoint gaps in knowledge and approaches taken.

Speaker: Ursula Karl-Trummer, Center for Health and Migration, Danube University Krems and University of Vienna

Speaker: Stephan Van den Broucke, Department of International Health, University of Maastricht

COFFEE 10h45

Presentation: Contributing to Policy Development – EC Funded Research

The FP6 project EURO-PREVOB is a European coordination action linking science and policy-making to tackle obesity through effective nutrition and physical activity actions. The project promotes and supports collaboration across existing networks to tackle the social and economic determinants of obesity in Europe, including developments that recognise the specificities of sub-regional groupings of countries. The aim is to develop an integrated set of guidelines and recommendations on best practice for the implementation of obesity prevention and control actions at the EU and the wider European levels.

Speaker: Cécile Knai, Young Gasteiner, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Presentation: Contributing to Policy Development - EC Public Health Programme

The EC public health programme project EHLEIS aims to monitor and explore gender gaps and inequalities in health expectancies between EU Member States and identify explanatory factors for convergent or divergent trends. In doing so it compares data on health inequalities in the EU and seek to demonstrate best practice for policy makers.

Speaker: Carol Jagger, Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester

Discussion with the audience

LUNCH

FORUM 4 - SESSION III

THURSDAY 1ST OCTOBER – 14h30 to 17h30

Working title: EC projects contributing to the health inequalities debate

This part of the session will see a selection of European projects being challenged to identify the relevance and contribution of their research and findings to the health inequalities debate, allowing a scientific perspective from the Framework Programmes and the public health programme, pointing out where we are now at the European level. The intention is that these presentations will give food for thought and reflection for the panel discussion after the break.
(10 minutes focused presentations)

Chair: Carlos Segovia, Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Spain

Rapporteur: Stephan Van den Broucke, Department of International Health, University of Maastricht

Presentation: EUROCADET

The EC FP6 EUROCADET project aims to underpin national and European policies to prevent cancer by providing estimates of the potential impact of interventions on determinants of cancer incidence on the future burden of cancer in Europe. Specifically, it aims to estimate the prevalence and quantitative impact of major lifestyle (smoking, excessive alcohol use, fruit and vegetable

consumption, overweight and physical activity) and socio-economic determinants on cancer incidence, concerning cancers of the oral cavity, larynx, lung, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, colo-rectum, bladder, kidney, breast, endometrium and prostate, comprising 60% of the incidence. It also endeavours to assess the potential to reduce exposure to these determinants by reviewing evidence of effectiveness of interventions and policies as well as barriers to implementation. In doing so the project will estimate the future burden of cancer across Europe based on autonomous trends and various scenarios of implementation of effective interventions.

Speaker: Jan Willem Coebergh, Erasmus Medical Centre, University of Rotterdam

Presentation: IDEFICS

The EC FP6 IDEFICS project first aims to improve knowledge about dietary factors, social environment and lifestyle affecting the health of children in Europe on the one hand, and on the other it seeks to develop, implement, evaluate and validate specific intervention approaches for reducing the prevalence of diet and lifestyle related diseases and disorders. Multiple approaches will be used, involving diet, physical activity and stress coping, with special focus on vulnerable groups such as lower social classes, single parents and migrants. Starting from the nursery and primary school setting, activities will act on several levels – community, school, household and individual – and all programmes thoroughly evaluated for effect, cost and practicality of development, feasibility and acceptance.

Speaker: Wolfgang Ahrens, Institute for Prevention Research and Social Medicine,
University of Bremen

Presentation: DETERMINE & GRADIENT

EuroHealthNet will demonstrate in a very concrete way how EC funding from two different policy domains can be harnessed for a common purpose. The EC public health project DETERMINE seeks to apply the EU and its Member State's shared policy competences to act on the socio-economic determinants of health, to ensure greater awareness of the responsibility that all policy sectors, beyond the health sector, have with respect to maintaining and improving the health of EU citizens, and to gather the evidence of the benefits of greater collective investment in health. In doing so a high level, multi-stakeholder EU platform across policy sectors in the EU and Member States will be established to discuss health in all policies, and amongst other things, innovative approaches to change health-related behaviours amongst vulnerable groups and conduct pilot actions to implement these approaches will be examined.

The FP7 project GRADIENT aims to address what actions are effective to reduce the gradient in health inequalities. The focus will be on families and children since the greatest impact on reducing the health gradient can be achieved through early life policy interventions and by creating equal opportunities during childhood and adolescence. Research to be undertaken will examine why traditional public health and health promotion policy measures do not reach or fail to change behaviours amongst the more socially deprived groups and some currently understudied protective factors (particularly the influence of social capital on children, adolescents and families) that could be important to tackling the health gradient will be looked at.

Speaker: Caroline Costongs, EuroHealthNet

Presentation: HELENA

The EC FP6 HELENA project aims to develop innovative methods to assess diet, nutrition, and physical activity and fitness in adolescents of different European countries. By contributing to knowledge about dietary and physical activity patterns in European adolescents and about cultural, social, genetic and gender differences and similarities across Europe, better insight about the factors influencing the food choices and food preferences of adolescents in Europe will be gained thus helping establish an environment that supports positive health behaviour and healthy lifestyle as a key to health promotion and disease prevention.

Speaker: Luis Moreno, E.U. Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad de Zaragoza

Presentation: EARNEST

The FP6 EARNEST project aims to collect the best possible data from large randomised, controlled human and animal trials, as well as prospective studies and to examine the extent to which early nutrition programmes affect long-term adult health. It will also examine the extent such nutrition programmes "programme" adult disposition to obesity, diabetes, vascular, bone and immune diseases, cancer as well as brain development. The socio-economic costs of poor nutrition and analyse consumer knowledge and attitudes about nutritional programming will also be assessed, establishing the potential of public health interventions to prevent and reverse harmful programming. It will also aim provide quantitative estimates of how European wealth creation would be enhanced by improved early nutrition, furnishing a strong scientific basis for promoting health across the board, helping to correct social inequalities in healthcare, education and economic development.

Speaker: Berthold Koletzko, Dr von Hauner Children's Hospital, University of Munich

Discussion with the audience

COFFEE 15h30

PANEL DISCUSSION

Working title: Setting the FP7 Health Research Agenda

A concluding panel debate will round up these research sessions with the specific objective of identifying concrete elements for consideration in the preparation for the next FP7 call for proposals under the 3rd pillar of the health theme. This 3rd pillar entitled "Optimising the delivery

of healthcare to European citizens" includes in its mandate a clear focus on health promotion and the wider determinants of health – the 5th call for proposals is expected to be published in July 2010. The intention here is to stimulate a debate to identify pressing priorities that are in particular relevant to the health theme, but perhaps also germane to the public health programme and other areas of the 7th Framework Programme.

Moderator: Clive Needle, EuroHealthNet

Rapporteur: Stephan Van den Broucke, Department of International Health, University of Maastricht

Panel Members:

Fiona Adshead	Chronic Disease and Health Promotion at the WHO
Ana Raquel Nunes	Representative Young Gasteiner Initiative
Denny Vågerö	WHO Commission on Social Determinants
Rudi Van Dam	Belgian Federal Public Service, Social Security
Erzsébet Szöllösi	European Disability Forum

FORUM 4 - SESSION IV

FRIDAY 2nd OCTOBER – 9h00 to 12h00

Working title: Tackling health inequalities – Europe in action – Food, farming, physical activity and nutrition

The final part of these 4 sessions making up these EC parallel forums will focus on a particular issue of the health inequalities debate, namely food, farming, physical activity and nutrition, illustrating policy and research in action. This part will serve to demonstrate how concrete measures in a particular policy area derive from different Commission services - DG Health and Consumer, DG Agriculture and DG Research. Certain projects will be invited to identify the relevance of their findings to this area of the health inequalities debate.

Chair: Clive Needle, Director, EuroHealthNet

Rapporteur: Laura Otero Garcia, Young Gasteiner

Presentation:

Diet, nutrition and physical activity vary by social group and area of residence and are important elements in any strategy to tackle health inequalities. The current financial crisis has if anything

heightened their importance through differential impacts on buying and eating habits. This presentation will show illustrate the role of diet and physical activity in the genesis of health inequalities including insights into the importance of financial circumstances. It will describe current and future actions being supported by DG SANCO to address the issue.

Speaker: Cécile Knai, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Presentation:

In the FP7, food research is to be found in the Specific Programme on Collaboration, Theme 2 “Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology”. The overall objective of this theme is to build a “European Knowledge Based Bio-Economy” by bringing together science, industry and other stakeholders, in order to exploit new and emerging research opportunities that address social, economic and environmental challenges in agriculture, food, forestry, aquaculture, and fisheries. The challenge is thus to correctly manage our biological resources and use them for the sustainable production of both safe, healthy and diversified food and bio-based materials for industry and energy. The activity "Fork to farm: food, health and well-being" will offer new research opportunities for improving nutrition, food safety and consumers protection to support public health policy. The nutrition science of today has evolved from the classical concept of prevention nutrient deficiencies diseases to the concept of optimal nutrition. This latter concept aims at optimising the nutrient intake to promote overall health and well-being, to improve the physical and mental performance and to reduce the risk of disease such as cancer, obesity, CVD, diabetes. This will be achieved through the exploration and understanding of the interrelationships between factors such as lifestyles, dietary factors and health. Functional food will also offer a great potential to improve health and help to prevent chronic diseases of the European citizens. Providing scientific evidences substantiating the health benefits of these products will help to protect the consumers, encourage the innovation of new industrial products by food manufacturers wishing to use health or nutrition claims and ensure a fair trade. Research collaboration between different disciplines such as nutrition, food, technology, cognitive and health science provides the scientific basis for a successful development of functional food.

The EU project Pro Children is a true example of research serving policy. It aimed to identify determinants of fruit and vegetables intake among school children and to develop appropriate and effective strategies to promote fruit and vegetables among school children and their parents across Europe, allowing DG Agriculture to build focused initiatives to improve diet. This presentation will illustrate the way in which targeted research can best serve European policy in this area through the development of intervention strategies with direct relevance to public health and education promoting healthy eating for all.

Speakers: Antonio Di Giulio, European Commission, DG Research

Carmen Pérez-Rodrigo, Bilbao Department of Public Health

Presentation:

EU Agriculture and rural development policy has supported a number of initiatives aimed at improving diet – including the school fruit scheme, school milk scheme and food for vulnerable groups. This presentation will mainly deal with the integration and examples from EU agricultural policy to reduce health inequalities and integrate public health objectives.

Speaker: Robert Pederson, European Agriculture and Health Consortium

Discussion with the audience

COFFEE 10h30

STATEMENT FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Speaker: Antonyia Parvanova, MEP

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Moderator: Clive Needle, EuroHealthNet

Participants:

Jenny Telander, Rapporteur – part 1
Taavi Lai, Rapporteur – part 2
Stephan Van den Broucke, Rapporteur – part 3
Laura Otero Garcia, Rapporteur – part 4

Michael Hübel, European Commission, DG Health & Consumers
Kevin McCarthy, European Commission, DG Research