

COUNCIL WORKING PARTY ON PUBLIC HEALTH AT SENIOR LEVEL

SECOND MEETING, 29 MAY 2009

HEALTHCARE QUALITY

Patient safety and wider quality issues

The Commission adopted in December 2008 a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on patient safety, which also addresses the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections. This proposal is currently debated by the Council and it is the intention of the Czech Presidency to adopt it during the EPSCO Council 8-9 June 2009.

Originally, the Commission intended to address, in this same proposal, wider quality of healthcare issues. However, during the preparatory work it became clear that this concept was too ambitious and that the healthcare quality topic deserved to be developed in its own right, as it encompassed a far broader set of issues than patient safety. Therefore, in the Communication on patient safety the Commission limited itself to highlighting that the two topics are closely related and announced its intention to address quality at a later time.

Conclusions of the 9 December meeting

Enhancing the quality culture in healthcare was the main topic of discussion of the first meeting of the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level, on 9 December 2008.

The discussion showed that improvement of quality of health services is a priority objective in the Member States regardless of differences in organisation of their health systems, and that the challenges remain the same across the EU. Member States also expressed their expectations about any European actions: facilitating cooperation between Member States, exchange of information and best practices and comparative research. EU action could help Member States identify solutions, possible gaps and how to best assure the overall quality of health services.

The Commission's Working Group on Patient Safety and Quality of Care

In the meeting, the Commission informed the Senior level Group that the "Patient Safety and Quality of Care Working Group" would continue its work. The Working Group met on 28 April to discuss its future terms of reference in the field of patient safety and on wider quality issues (Annex 1). According to terms of reference, the group would focus first on helping implementation of the patient safety recommendation, and second, it would produce a reflection paper identifying common priorities in the area of quality, as well as actions at EU and MS level necessary to meet them.

The reflection paper would subsequently be submitted to a wider consultation.

The terms of reference specify as well that the group would liaise with the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level by informing the latter about the progress and outcomes of its work and preparing technical papers for discussions at senior level.