

Summary Report of the responses to
Health in Europe: A Strategic Approach
Discussion Document for a Health Strategy

SUMMARY

At the end of 2006, the Commission launched a consultation process based on a paper, 'Health in Europe: A Strategic Approach - Discussion Document for a Health Strategy'¹. This consultation was to enable stakeholders to provide input into how a new Health Strategy should be developed and implemented.² The consultation ended in February 2007. The Commission received 153 responses. The contributions welcomed the proposal for a new overarching, strategic and coherent framework for health policy in the next decade. Health was seen as valuable in its own right, but also as a key factor supporting European economic growth, and was therefore recognised by many respondents as an important investment for the European Union.

Contributors generally expressed support for the approach proposed by the Commission: working on a number of core health issues, developing a stronger approach to health considerations in all policies and engaging more strongly in global issues. Most respondents stressed the importance of taking action where European added value is clear, and where challenges are of a cross-border nature.

Many respondents said that European cooperation should be enhanced in a number of fields including health threats, health inequalities, health information and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The burden of non-communicable disease was particularly highlighted. Contributors also stressed the need for the development of a European health information system with an open access to comparable data. In terms of implementation, the establishment of a mechanism of structured cooperation with the Member States using methods that have been tried and tested under the Open Method of Coordination was welcomed by many respondents. However, alternative approaches were also proposed, including the development of existing or new European-level structures to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

Setting objectives was considered to be of major importance for the Health Strategy, and a number of proposals were made for short term and long term objectives. Respondents called for outcome and process indicators to monitor progress towards the objectives of the Health Strategy. These should be defined in cooperation with Member States. Member States would be responsible for providing data, while the Commission would provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating progress

Finally, many responses stressed that the success of the Strategy would be linked to its being seen as having clear links with the actions being undertaken in Member States. This would require that there was a clear sense of ownership and active involvement in its development by health authorities and other stakeholders. To that end, some respondents recommended the development not only of a European Community strategic approach, but complementary action plans in the Member States.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/Documents/strategy_discussion_en.pdf

² The Commission had previously launched a reflection process "Enabling good health for all" in 2004 which set out some general concepts about the contents and scope of a health strategy for consideration by stakeholders. http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/strategy/reflection_process_en.htm.