



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

**HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL CARE**

<b>Document:</b> Options for a work programme for the High Level Group	
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## HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL CARE

### **Subject: Options for a work programme for the High Level Group**

This document is intended to set out some options for the work of the High Level Group in order to promote cooperation between the Member States and to take forward the recommendations of the reflection process.

Health services and medical care are primarily the responsibility of the Member States and should remain so. However, it is clear from the conclusions of the reflection process that there is great potential for cooperation at European level to help patients to have high-quality health care and to help health systems to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. The work programme of the High Level Group should aim to realise this potential in practice.

Respecting national responsibility for health systems does not mean doing nothing at European level. Rather, this High Level Group can ensure that there are structures in place to facilitate cooperation where useful and ensure that where Europe does have an impact on health or health systems, it does so in a positive way and that those responsible for achieving health objectives can shape those developments.

Areas of interest to the High Level Group fall into two broad groups:

- **cooperation between health systems:** the reflection process identified a range of actions for cooperation at European level which could help health systems improve their efficiency and effectiveness, such as centres of reference or health technology assessment. These range from some relatively short-term issues (such as taking forward work on centres of reference) to longer-term projects (such as developing an overall information strategy for health systems) – the High Level Group may wish to focus initially on a mix of both short-term and long-term topics;
- **health in other policies:** there are several other initiatives which are relevant to health services, such as the forthcoming Communication on social and health services of general interest, the proposed directive on services in the internal market, the proposal to use the open method of coordination in the field of healthcare and long-term care, and the communication setting out an action plan for e-health. The Group may wish to consider how best to influence these discussions and to ensure that the specific needs and characteristics of health services are properly taken into account.

Of course, the options below are only possible approaches. The High Level Group may wish to take a different approach to the topics identified; or may wish to identify other areas (such as improving quality in healthcare across Europe) either now or as cooperation develops, in particular in the light of the provisions of the draft Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe.

Topic	Options
<b>Rights and duties of patients</b>	Exchange information on these issues (covering issues such as rights to timely and appropriate healthcare, sufficient information to enable informed choices, confidentiality of health data, respecting human dignity and compensation for harm) and how they are addressed through a questionnaire to the Member States. This could also take into consideration the rights and duties of health professionals.
<b>Cross-border healthcare purchasing and provision</b>	Exchange information on existing arrangements and identify key lessons. This could draw on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– evaluation of some existing Euregio cooperation projects;</li> <li>– information from Member States on purchasing arrangements for cross-border care;</li> <li>– information from Member States on operation of different access routes and their impact, in particular for the new Member States;</li> <li>– a study on the motivation for and scope of cross-border care;</li> <li>– and relevant research projects.</li> </ul> The High Level Group could then discuss any proposals on the basis of a first round of information gathering.

<b>Health professionals</b>	<p>Developing an issues paper on health professional workforce planning. This could review available evidence (drawing on data from the Social Situation Report 2003, for example), and could consider issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training;</li> <li>- recruitment;</li> <li>- retention;</li> <li>- quality;</li> <li>- and information.</li> </ul> <p>Work in this area should be undertaken in cooperation with the Committee of Senior Officials on Public Health (established under the mutual recognition of qualifications provisions) and could also draw on projects underway on improving confidential exchange of information between Member States regarding health professionals.</p>
<b>Centres of reference</b>	<p>As a first step developing terms of reference for a mapping study of centres of reference. This would take into account the reflection process conclusions that any system of European centres of reference should be flexible, objective and transparent, with clear criteria, scientific and health professional involvement, and should take into account the need for services and expertise to be appropriately distributed across the enlarged European Union.</p>
<b>Health technology assessment</b>	<p>Develop specific proposals for improving coordination of work taking account of the International Health Technology Assessment network and other organisations and projects already active in the field.</p>
<b>Health systems information strategy</b>	<p>Exchange information on the different indicators and information available (in particular through Eurostat, the public health programme, the WHO and the OECD), with a view to identifying key indicators and data for health services and medical care and a work programme to develop these</p> <p>This should be carried out in collaboration with the health systems working party under the public health programme and the indicators sub-group of the Social Protection Committee.</p>
<b>Data protection rules</b>	<p>Exchange information on different national provisions on data protection rules as they apply to the health sector and possibilities for data transfer (examples of patient records, research data, inter-professional exchange) to see if further action would be useful, such as development of guidelines for patients and health professionals.</p> <p>This work should be carried out in collaboration with the Data Protection Working Party established under European data protection legislation.</p>
<b>E-health</b>	<p>Review the actions envisaged in the e-health action plan to identify any key areas where the High Level Group should contribute.</p>
<b>Health impact assessment and health systems</b>	<p>Review existing methodologies for health impact assessment of European proposals and consider how these could better take into account health system issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what procedures are used for health impact assessment at</li> </ul>

	<p>national level;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– what issues assessment should take into account (perhaps focused around accessibility, quality, financial sustainability);</li> <li>– how these can be assessed;</li> <li>– and mechanisms for flagging up forthcoming proposals with an impact on health systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Open method of coordination on healthcare and long-term care</b>	Discussion and comments on the draft opinion being prepared by the Social Protection Committee on extending the open method of coordination to healthcare and long-term care.
<b>Developing a shared European vision for health systems</b>	<p>Exchange information in order to identify the specific characteristics of health systems and the areas of action needed in order to manage them, perhaps covering issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– demand side: issues such as entitlements of patients, conditions for access to those entitlements and limits on them;</li> <li>– supply side: issues such as distribution and organisation of health service provision, quality standards;</li> <li>– overall public health objectives: issues where regulation must be possible in order to protect public health.</li> </ul> <p>A common understanding of these issues could serve as a basis for ensuring that the specificities of health systems are taken into account in national and European law.</p>
<b>European investment in health and health systems</b>	Exchange information on the needs for investment in health and health infrastructure in different Member States and examples of current projects in order to generate a better understanding of investment needs and a 'menu' of possible initiatives for national and regional authorities to draw on in setting priorities.