



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

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

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Brussels, 24 July 2008  
HLG/2008/04

**MEETING OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL CARE  
9 JULY 2008, BRUSSELS**

**Subject: Minutes of the meeting**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Participants were welcomed to the meeting of the High Level Group (HLG) by the chairman, Mr R. Madelin (European Commission, DG SANCO). The draft agenda (HLG/2008/02) was adopted.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 30 January 2008 (HLG/2008/01) were adopted.

**3. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

Two working groups ('Cross-border healthcare purchasing and provision' and 'European reference networks') have met in the morning.. The HLG nevertheless discussed the work of all working groups.

**3.1. Cross-border healthcare purchasing and provision (including patient rights)**

Mr J. Cachia (Malta), co-chair of the working group, presented the outcome of the meeting of the group.

The working group during its meeting discussed the issue of medical liability and how this issue is addressed in different Member States. Based on the presentation of Professor Herman Nys (University of Leuven), the following approaches were discussed by the working group, in order to improve the current situation:

- Investing in protecting and restoring confidence of the citizens in the safety of the health system and the trust in the medical profession.

- Lifting barriers and obstacles to obtain compensation by offering alternative means of compensation in stead of a procedure through a court.
- Taking initiatives to ameliorate the mutual understanding between the medical and the legal profession.

The future of the working group was also considered. The working group considered that it has completed its mission and, especially in the view of the recently adopted Proposal for a directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, there is no need for further meetings of this working group. This was agreed by the Plenary. The working group will therefore not meet any more in the future.

### **3.2. Working group on European reference networks**

Ms A. Fourcade (France), chair of the working group, presented the outcome of the meeting of the group. The working group received an update about the EU action on rare diseases, in particular about preparations of the upcoming Commission communication and a proposal for the Council recommendation.

The working group also discussed the state of play of the ongoing pilot projects on European reference networks (ERN) for rare diseases. Five projects are supported under the 2006 Call for proposals in the framework of the Public Health Programme. Under the 2007 Call for proposals, additional three projects were selected under the Public Health Programme and two projects under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme. Initial replies of the pilot projects to the questionnaire prepared by the working group were discussed.

At its next meeting the working group should focus also on identifying other areas beyond rare diseases where the concept of ERN could be of added value.

It was agreed by the Plenary that this working group should continue its work also in the future and that it would be inappropriate to stop it at this stage. The working group can also help the Public Health Executive Agency and the Commission to define the technical criteria for preparing and evaluating calls for proposals in this area. However, once the directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare is adopted, discussions on the issues of ERN may move to other places, in particular to the new committee.

### **3.3. Working group on Health Professionals**

Ms D. Melor (UK), chair of the working group, presented the outcome of the meeting of the group. Discussions were focused on the preparation of the Commission Green Paper on Health Workforce in the EU.

The idea of a Green Paper was welcomed by the working group firstly because it would raise awareness of issues which are of high importance to Member States and as a way of sharing good practice and developing common solutions were appropriate. There was general consensus on proposed scope of the Green paper on the EU Workforce for Health. The additional items to be given greater weight were patient safety and quality, team working, and issues of common and specific interest to member states.

The need for better data to assist workforce planning and planning for future health service demand was a common theme as well as awareness of the impact of social care policies and workforce planning on the health workforce. A third crucial issue was policy on managing mobility and migration more effectively.

Member States were invited to suggest mechanisms for better stakeholder engagement. There was interest in EU involvement in workshops to promote better stakeholder dialogue.

The working group would also like to explore the possibility of increasing the period for the Green Paper consultation in order to get a better response. This was noted by the Commission and will be further considered.

### **3.4. Working group on Patient Safety**

As the working group did not meet this time, Ms K. Neubauer (European Commission, DG SANCO) presented the current state of play and in particular on the meeting of the Working Group on Patient Safety (PSWG) that was held on 17 June 2008.

The main objectives of this meeting were: for the working group to receive feedback on the early findings of the recent open consultation on patient safety; for the working group to hear about, and to provide feed back on the Commission's early thoughts on the possible content of its patient safety proposal; for the working group to receive information from the Commission on the recast of the medical device legislation and to update the working group on the EUNetPaS project.

Regarding the results of the patient safety consultation, it was open for a period of 8 weeks starting on 25 of March. 185 replies had been received, 30 of which came from competent authorities at either national, regional or local level. There was strong support for all nine possible areas for action put forward by the Commission at national and/or EU levels. All the contributions to the consultation were available on SANCO's web page. A summary report and a breakdown of all participants would follow before the summer break.

Regarding the forthcoming Commission's patient safety initiative, the working group was informed that this initiative would address patient safety in general terms and also include recommendations on the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections. A Commission Communication and a Council Recommendation had emerged as the most appropriate, since this would represent a strong commitment for Member States whilst allowing them to continue to organise healthcare nationally as they do at present. In developing the systemic patient safety parts of its proposal, the Commission would build on the recommendation on patient safety from the PSWG to the High Level Group, the recommendation on patient safety by the Council of Europe and on the results of the public consultation.

In the subsequent discussion the Commission reassured the members that it would carry out a detailed analysis of the responses given by different groups of stakeholders with a particular focus on competent authorities and that the Commission was looking into how to involve the working group in the further development of the patient safety imitative.

### **3.5. Information and e-Health**

As agreed by the HLG in 2006, the work of this working group has been suspended and effectively taken over by the working group of DG INFSO.

Ms L. Hromkova (European Commission, DG INFSO) presented the work of DG INFSO in the field of eHealth, in particular on the recently adopted proposal for a Recommendation on cross-border interoperability of electronic health record systems and the planned initiative on telemedicine.

As regards the recommendation on cross-border interoperability of electronic health record systems the importance of increasing the compatibility between MS related to electronic health records was stressed. The planned initiative on telemedicine should present the potential benefits of telemedicine and healthcare at a distance for patients and for economy.

The issue of transmission of documents and information about e-health activities at EU level was also discussed. Member States should make sure that the information gets to the competent authority within their administration, even in the areas where more than one sector is involved (for example, health, information society, social affairs, data protection etc.).

## **4. PREPARATIONS OF THE REPORT OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP FOR 2008**

Preparations of the 2008 HLG Report were discussed. A template for working group contributions was circulated before the meeting. These contributions and any other comments should be made in time for a revised and completed draft report to be considered and adopted by the High Level Group at its next meeting after the summer. The written procedure will be used for preparation of a draft Report over the summer. This timetable will allow the adopted report to be submitted to the Council in time so that it could be put on the agenda of the EPSCO Council meeting in December.

As regards the future of the HLG, it was agreed that the discussions currently held in the HLG Plenary should move to the new Council coordination mechanism once it is established. The main outstanding task for the HLG Plenary is to adopt the 2008 Report. However, as regards the working groups, it was agreed that three working groups, namely Patient Safety, European Reference Networks and Health Professionals, should continue their work and it is not appropriate to stop them at this stage. They should continue working, but without any reporting to the HLG Plenary.

Detailed arrangements for the abovementioned transition should be discussed at the next HLG meeting in September.

## **5. COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK ON THE APPLICATION OF PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE**

On 2 July the Commission adopted as part of its Renewed Social Agenda Package a Proposal for a directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare and an accompanying Commission Communication. Mr Martin Dorazil (European

Commission, DG SANCO) presented this new proposed framework. The presentation is attached.

An exchange of views on this issue took place at the end of the meeting. It was made clear, however, that the HLG is not an appropriate forum for an in-depth discussion on this topic and that these issues should be discussed primarily in the Council. DG SANCO is also planning visits to Member States; this would be an opportunity to provide detailed explanations and clarify any outstanding issues.

## **6. EUROPEAN HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT NETWORK**

The European health technology assessment network has been established on the basis of the High Level Group's 2004 recommendation, with financial support from the 2005 Call for proposals under the Public Health Programme. The network should connect national agencies and health ministries, enabling an effective exchange of information on the short- and long-term effectiveness of health technologies and thus supporting policy decisions by Member States to improve quality of care and efficient use of resources.

Representatives of the project, Mr K. Lampe and Ms. J. Chamova presented a short update on the state of play of this project. The presentation is attached.

The recently adopted Proposal for a directive on cross-border healthcare will provide a solid basis for further work in this area. However, it was agreed that the Commission as well as Member States should reflect on how to provide support to the HTA network between the end of the 3-years term of the project and entry into force of the Directive.

## **7. FRAMEWORK RESEARCH PROGRAMME AND HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL CARE**

At the last HLG meeting in January, the Commission informed the group that a number of projects closely linked to the work of the HLG are being funded from the Framework Research Programmes. It was then agreed that at the next meeting more comprehensive information will be provided. Mr K. McCarthy (European Commission, DG RTD) presented the activities taking place under the umbrella of DG RTD and projects selected for funding under the 7th Framework Program. The presentation is attached.

## **8. NEXT MEETINGS**

Next meeting of the HLG should take place on 12 September 2008. The main item on the agenda will be adoption of the 2008 HLG Report.

No decision has been taken yet regarding the other meeting that was planned for 12 November 2008. Members should await confirmation from the Commission as this meeting might be cancelled.

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