

Health Priorities of Danish EU Presidency

During the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU, a number of dossiers on the health area will dominate the work of the Council:

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR);
- Action Programme in the Field of Health;
- Amendment of the Directive on Tobacco;
- Amendment of the Transparency Directive; and
- The Health Threats Package.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) does not respect national borders, and the rising level of resistance due to the increased use of antibiotics in both humans and animals is a challenge for most European countries. AMR has been dealt with by previous Presidencies and the Danish Presidency will build on the results already achieved. Major challenges still lie ahead, and Denmark considers it important to keep the issue high on the agenda in the EU.

During the Presidency there will be a focus on promoting a more rational use of antibiotics and on strengthening and improving the surveillance of the use of and resistance to antibiotics. Additionally, Denmark's focus will be on reducing the use of antibiotics in humans and animals, including a particular decrease in the use of critically important antimicrobials (CIA's) in animals. The headline of the initiative is "Prudent Use" which focuses on promoting a more prudent and rational use of antibiotics.

The overriding purpose of the EU Action Programme in the Field of Health (2008-2013) is to help to achieve a high level of protection for the health and safety of European citizens. The programme has three objectives:

- To improve citizens' health security;
- To promote health, which involves reducing inequalities in this area; and
- To generate and disseminate health information and knowledge.

Along with the programme, funds have been allocated in the EU's budget for the financing of projects and joint initiatives that can contribute to achieving these objectives. The present Action Programme in the Field of Health expires on 31 December 2013. In autumn 2011 the Commission presented a proposal for a new Action Programme in the Field of Health that will be up for discussion during the Danish Presidency.

At present the Commission is preparing an amendment of the present directive on tobacco from 2001. The directive aims to ensure a well-functioning Internal Market for tobacco products as well as to ensure a high level of health protection. The existing directive provides a number of requirements that tobacco products on the European market have to fulfil. These requirements among others concern the determination of threshold values for tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide, provisions on warning labels, bans on the use of terms such as "light", "mild" and the like, as well as requirements on filing which additives are used in tobacco products.

In May 2011, the Commission completed a broad public consultation on the need for an amendment of the Transparency Directive. The Transparency Directive aims to ensure transparency in the measures that Member States establish for the purpose of controlling prices of and limit public reimbursement for medical products.

The public consultation was initiated because the market for medical products and the Member States' provisions on control and limitation of the expenses for medicinal products have changed significantly since the Directive was originally launched in the 1980s. Therefore, the Commission wished to explore the need for an amendment of the directive. The consultation was among others directed towards a possible expansion of the scope of the Directive.

The opening negotiations of the Commission's proposal for a Health Threats Package will take place during the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Purpose of the proposal is to achieve a cross-sectorial approach to health threats in order to link initiatives in the health sector to already existing EU policies in other areas. The proposal is thus to ensure better coordination of crisis responses and crisis handling of major cross-border health threats.

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