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Your Relevant Directorates-General & Commissioners

Authors

Helicia Herman

Title: Editor European Affairs

Organisation: Euromedical

Communications

Email: europe@emceurope.com

Karmin Ruocco

Title: Managing Editor

Organisation:

Healthcare IT Management

Email: k.ruocco.me@eahitm.org

In this article, we give an overview of the European Commission Directorates-General active in policies relevant to healthcare IT and present examples of their legislation, activities and contact details.

DG Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding

Most relevant to healthcare IT, this DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• eHealth and eLearning developments in the European Union;

• radio spectrum policy / wireless communications;

• broadband;

• security of networks and data;

• digital rights management;

• overcoming obstacles to 3G deployment;

• ambient intelligence;

• health related effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields, and

• the quality of health related websites.

Examples of EU legislation and activities in these fields:

• the *e*Europe Action Plan, which addresses health telematics infrastructures, establishes best practices for electronic health services in Europe & quality criteria for health-related websites, and the establishment of health technology and data assessment networks

• launched in July 2003, the Electronic Communications Regulatory Framework, safeguarding radio spectrum resources to include: wireless communications, the use of satellite wireless communications, the use of satellite technologies, mobile telephony and scientific research;

• establishing the development of information society technologies as a priority within the EU's Sixth Framework Programme;

• a Directive on privacy and electronic communications;

• annual Conferences on eHealth, including the upcoming eHealth 2006 Conference in Malaga, Spain 10-12 May and IST 2006 in Helsinki, Finland 22-24 November, and

• political action calling on governments and the private sector to make better use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Europe's healthcare systems. 200, B-1049 Brussels,

Belgium DG Enterprise & Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen

This DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• telecommunications;

• information and communication technologies;

• electrical risk and electrical equipment, and

• medical devices.

Examples of EU legislation and activities in these fields:

• harmonised standards for radio & telecommunications terminal equipment;

• harmonised standards for electromagnetic compatibility, and

• with regards to medical devices, the European Community's involvement concerns mainly the regulatory framework for market access, international trade relations and regulatory convergence, and the competitiveness of industry. In May 2005, the Commission started a public consultation process to improve public health and safety of medical devices.

Correspondence:

DG Health and Consumer Protection (known as DG "SANCO")

Commissioner Markos Kyprianou

This DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• public health: including health information networks, eHealth initiatives, electronic health cards, and health information privacy and protection, and

• dissemination of health information and data. Examples of EU legislation and activities in these fields:

• a Decision in December 2004 to set up the 'Executive Agency for the Public Health Programme', for the management of Community action in the field of public health;

• in conjunction with DG Information Society and Media, the *e*Europe Action Plan (adopted in June 2000), and

• in February this year, the Commission launched the Health Information Project, which aims to foster the exchange of health information across Europe.

DG Internal Market and Services

Commissioner Charlie McCreevy

Relevant to healthcare IT, this DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• labour law and work organisation;

• health and safety at work, including exposure to electromagnetic fields, radiation and visual display units, and

• free movement of workers. Examples of EU legislation in these fields:

• the Directive concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, currently in revision;

• a Directive on minimum health and safety requirements in working with display screen equipment;

• a recent Directive on exposure to electromagnetic fields, and

• a Directive on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.

DG Employment, Social affairs and Equal Opportunities

Commissioner Vladimir Spidla

This DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• electronic public procurement;

• data protection;

• electronic commerce and online services, i.e. electronic pay services and smart cards;

• free movement of persons, i.e. mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and

• free movement of services. Examples of EU legislation and activities in these fields:

• adopted in June 2000, the eCommerce Directive establishing the harmonisation of rules and transparency requirements for online service providers, commercial communications, electronic contracts and limitations of liability of intermediary service providers;

• a Directive on the legal protection of electronic pay services (including the piracy of smart cards);

• aDirective relating to the recognition of professional qualifications, adopted on 6 June 2005, and

• a Directive on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts, in force since April 2004.

DG Research

Commissioner Janez Potocnik

This DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• ICT research and development;

• creating a regulatory environment that enables the rapid development of services based on information, communications and audio-visual technologies;

• encouraging the widespread availability and accessibility of ICT-based services, and

• promoting a better understanding of the role of science in modern societies .

Examples of EU activities in these fields:

• A European Research Framework Programme (the 7th programme is currently in preparation and due to start in 2007) that helps to organise and financially support cooperation between universities, research centres and industries, and

• the creation of a European Research Area which is regrouping all Community support for the better coordination of research activities and the convergence of research and innovation policies, at national and EU levels.

DG Freedom, Security and Justice

Commissioner Franco Frattini

This DG is responsible for EU policy on:

• data protection;

• data privacy, and

• the transfer of data to third countries. Examples of EU activities in these fields:

• aDirective on the protection of individuals with regards to the processing of personal data;

• decisions on the adequacy of the protection of personal data in third countries, and

• developing model contracts for the transfer of personal data to third countries.