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Health and social issues

– The Swedish Presidency of the EU 2009

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From 1 July until 31 December, Sweden is holding the Presidency of the EU. This means that for six months, Sweden is leading the work in the EU Council of Ministers and is responsible for ensuring that progress is made on issues common to EU Member States. This applies to issues that have not been fully negotiated during previous Presidencies and issues that the Swedish Presidency itself considers important to discuss. Holding the Presidency also means that Sweden is responsible for representing the EU vis-à-vis non-EU countries and international organisations.

Here you can read about some of the most important health and social issues that the Swedish Presidency plans to pursue. Sweden has cooperated closely with France and the Czech Republic, which are part of the same Presidency Trio, in prioritising among many important issues. These issues also have the support of future Presidencies, particularly Spain, which will hold the Presidency after Sweden. The aim is to guarantee continuity in EU work and smooth transitions between Presidencies.

Several of the issues will be discussed in working groups and in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in Brussels, which Sweden is leading during the Presidency. These issues will also be focused upon at conferences and meetings in Sweden. Changes that occur around the world may mean that the Presidency must give priority to other issues, while issues it had planned to focus on are given less scope.

Rights of patients to health care in another EU country



Photo: Scanpix

The Swedish presidency will continue to pursue negotiations on proposals put forward by the European Commission in July 2008, concerning the rights of patients when receiving care in another EU country. The Court of Justice of the European Communities has ruled that health and medical services are subject to the principle of free movement in the same way as other services within the European Union. EU citizens are to be allowed to seek and receive health, medical and dental care in another EU country and receive compensation for this from their country of origin. The main thrust of the proposal is that patients should be entitled to do so without seeking permission beforehand.

The Pharmaceutical Package

The Presidency will drive negotiations forward on some parts of the Pharmaceutical Package. The Package consists of three proposals from the Commission. One of these deals with improving reporting within the EU of adverse reactions of approved pharmaceuticals. Another aims at improving the regulated distribution chain for pharmaceuticals to patients so as to prevent falsified pharmaceuticals from reaching the public. The third proposal entails the introduction of common rules making it possible for pharmaceutical companies to provide information on prescription pharmaceuticals to the general public.

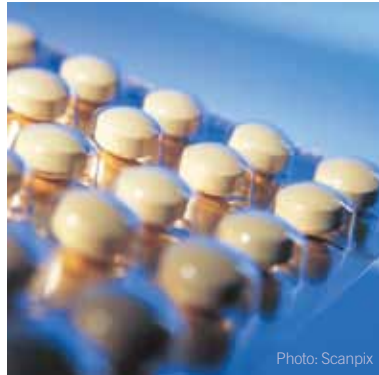


Photo: Scanpix

Effective use of medicinal products



A great deal of money is invested in research before a medicinal product is launched on the market. However, there is insufficient follow-up and knowledge of a product's long-term effects after the launch. The Swedish Presidency plans to initiate a process to increase the European cooperation on evaluating the effects of medicinal products after their approval. This cooperation is intended to lead to use of medicinal products that is better adapted to patients' needs.

Conference:

Assessing Drug Effectiveness – Common Opportunities and Challenges for Europe

29 July in Stockholm

Access to effective antibacterials

Bacteria that cannot be treated with conventional antibiotics is a growing problem, both in Sweden and elsewhere. At the same time, the level of research into and the development of new effective antibiotics is decreasing. Previous Presidencies have focused on the effective use of antibiotics and the prevention and control of infections that arise and are spread within health and medical services. The Swedish Presidency will attempt to take the issue one step further and focus on possible incentives for development of new effective antibacterials.

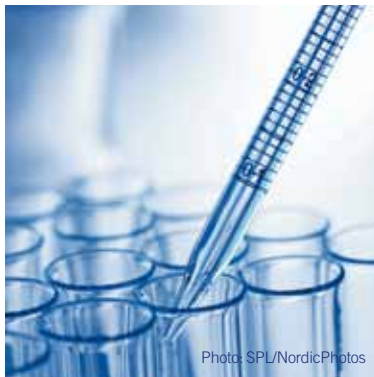


Photo: SPL/NordicPhotos

Conference:

Innovative Incentives for Effective Antibacterials

17 September in Stockholm

Prevention of alcohol-related harm



Within the EU harmful alcohol consumption is a threat to public health, social welfare and economic development. This is why the Presidency is prioritising work to prevent harm caused by alcohol consumption. The Presidency supports the implementation of the horizontal EU alcohol strategy and the establishment of long-term preventive work at both EU and national level. The goal is to reduce alcohol-related harm in the Union.

Conference:

Expert Meeting on Alcohol and Health

21-22 September in Stockholm

Healthy and dignified ageing

A growing proportion of elderly people in the population presents a challenge and an opportunity to all EU countries. The goal of the Presidency is to increase opportunities for healthy and dignified ageing for elderly people in the EU. Several countries are giving priority to efforts to ensure high standards of elderly care that provides dignity in old age. To achieve this dignity in elderly care, it is important to ensure that those who are working with health and social issues cooperate better and place the focus on the elderly person. The Presidency wants to find new ways to cooperate and coordinate and point to good examples in different EU countries. Through the initiative the Presidency wants to put elderly issues on the EU agenda in a longer-term perspective.



Photo: Plainpicture/Folio

Conference:

Conference on Healthy and Dignified Ageing
15-16 September in Stockholm



Calendar of meetings in Sweden 2009

Informal meeting of the EPSCO Council

– The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

Part 1: Informal meeting of Health Ministers

6-7 July in Jönköping

Part 2: Informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers

8-9 July in Jönköping

Conferences

Influenza preparedness and response – lessons learnt and next steps

2-3 July in Jönköping

Assessing Drug Effectiveness – Common Opportunities and Challenges for Europe

29 July in Stockholm

Conference on Healthy and Dignified Ageing

15-16 September in Stockholm

Innovative Incentives for Effective Antibacterials

17 September in Stockholm

Expert Meeting on Alcohol and Health

21-22 September in Stockholm



8th Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion

15-16 October in Stockholm

High-level Conference on Labour Market Inclusion

26-27 October in Stockholm

Conference on eGovernment. eHealth is part of this conference.

19-20 November in Malmö

Additional meetings

Informal Meeting of the Social Protection Committee

14 September in Stockholm

Drug Coordinators Meeting

2-3 November in Stockholm

MISSOC (Mutual Information System on Social Protection) meeting

10-11 November in Stockholm

High-level meeting of Permanent Group for Children's Affairs

20 November in Stockholm



Meetings organised by agencies

14th Forum of National Ethics Councils

Organizer: Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics

17-18 September in Stockholm

Mental Health in Youth

Organizer: Swedish National Institute of Public Health

29-30 September in Stockholm

Meeting with representatives for medical, dental and nursing issues

Organizer: National Board of Health and Welfare

30 September-2 October in Stockholm

Healthy ageing in Europe - Lessons learnt and ways forward

Organizer: Swedish National Institute of Public Health

22-23 October in Stockholm

Modernised EU Social Security Coordination – Preparation for the Application of the New Regulations on the Coordination of Social Security

Organizer: Swedish Social Insurance Agency

25-27 November in Stockholm

How to assess health technologies with high quality, transparency and comparability?

Organizer: Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care

3 December in Stockholm



**Assessment of Population Levels of Physical Activity.
Consensus Decision Making regarding the Recommendations to the
EU Commission**

Organizer: Karolinska institutet
5-6 November in Stockholm

Negotiations on health and social issues is also taking place in working parties in Brussels. This applies, for example, to the pharmaceutical package and to patients' rights when receiving care in another EU country. These issues will then be discussed in the EPSCO Council in Brussels on 30 November and 1 December.

Labour market inclusion



Work forms an important factor in economic and social welfare. Unemployment is increasing throughout Europe due to the economic crisis. It is important that the EU countries learn from each other and coordinate measures to reduce the negative effects of the ongoing crisis. At the same time the EU must address future challenges resulting from an ageing population. The Presidency will discuss how to prevent those who become unemployed now from ending up in long term exclusion. It is of particular importance to try to find ways back into work for those who, even before the crisis, had reduced work capacity due to ill-health. The Presidency will emphasise the importance of an active labour market policy combined with an active social security policy. The discussion will contribute to the work on the EU's new strategy for growth and jobs which will replace the Lisbon Strategy.

Conference:

High-level Conference on Labour Market Inclusion

26-27 October in Stockholm

Combating poverty and social exclusion

The Presidency will initiate a discussion on the EU active inclusion strategy, which aims at including those who are the most detached from the labour market and are socially excluded. It will be focused on how the strategy can be implemented in times of economic downturn. The aim is to inspire and show good, specific examples of how to continue work to include people in society. The discussion will serve as a prelude to 2010, which has been designated the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.



Conference:

8th Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion

15-16 October in Stockholm

eHealth for improved safety for patients receiving care in another EU country



To increase the safety and security of patients when receiving care and treatment in other Member States, the EU countries are cooperating on eHealth. This involves the all use of information and communication technology in the health care sector. Examples of such information are medical records, electronic prescriptions, digital X-rays and health information directed at citizens via web portals. These services will mean that it will be possible to transfer necessary medical records between care providers within and between countries in a simple and safe manner. Cooperation on eHealth is a prerequisite for enabling patients to receive safe and efficient treatment in another EU country. The aim of the Presidency is to show the added value of investments in eHealth and draw up a plan for how the EU can deepen and define this cooperation.

Conference:

Conference on eGovernment. eHealth is part of this conference.

19-20 November in Malmö

Preparedness for pandemic influenza

The EU countries have continuous discussions on how to work more closely together on preparedness for a pandemic spread of influenza, i.e. an influenza virus that spreads rapidly around the world. The countries are working together by exchanging experience on their pandemic planning, reporting on outbreaks of communicable diseases and exchanging other experience in the area of communicable disease control. The Presidency will take up the experience of 'new influenza' and how the EU and its member countries can move forward in their work on good preparedness.



Conference:

Influenza preparedness and response – lessons learnt and next steps
2-3 July in Jönköping

Promotion of the rights of the child



To promote the rights of the child the Swedish Presidency will initiate a discussion on how the right of the child to be heard can be realised using new media. Another discussion will deal with ways of combining working life with child care, based on the best interests of the child. Attention will also be given to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The Presidency will actively contribute to efforts to produce an EU strategy on the rights of the child. It will also encourage greater cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe on this issue.

Conference:

High-level meeting of Permanent Group for Children's Affairs
20 November in Stockholm

