



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
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Conference on “e-Health” in Barcelona Digital healthcare will save time and money in medical assistance

The introduction of new information technology in the health service was the objective of the 8th "e-Health" Conference attended by Health Ministers from the EU in Barcelona on 15-18 March. The conference, led by the Spanish Presidency of the EU and the European Commission was intended to mark a milestone in the development of common strategies in the field of e-health, in addition to celebrating 10 years since the beginning of the European e-Health Strategy.

Information technology is transforming health care in Europe - but not nearly as fast as the EU would like. With that in mind, European health ministers met in Spain this week to set long-term goals in 'e-health,' a term that refers to healthcare supported by electronic products and services. It implies not only the application of new technology but also a more efficient way of working.

For the first time the annual gathering is being held in the same week and the same place - Barcelona - as another yearly conference on e-health - this one geared to healthcare professionals and IT specialists.

Electronic services are seen as key to the wider development of an integrated European health market and crucial to keeping a lid on rising costs. In the EU, spending on health accounts for between 4% and 11% of gross domestic product and between 10% and 18% of total government spending.

Taxpayer-funded healthcare systems are becoming more expensive to maintain because of increased demand for services, driven mainly by ageing populations. By mid-century, nearly 40% of the EU's population is expected to be more than 65 years old, and there will be fewer workers to pay their health bills.

If a large majority of European doctors now use computers to store and share medical information, few are taking advantage of other IT applications like electronic prescriptions and telemonitoring, which allows patients to be monitored remotely without having to come into the doctor's office.

European eHealth Week 2010

http://www.ehealthweek2010.org/?set_language=en

E-health: key to better healthcare in Europe

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/index_en.htm

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... Parliament



Combating violence against women. EU-wide strategy needed

Participants in a European Parliament public hearing with national parliaments and civil society representatives, on the occasion of International Women's Day, recognised that an EU-wide strategy is needed to combat violence against women, which must be recognised as a crime. Participants also agreed on the need for EU-wide comparable data.

European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek said that one in four adult European women is a victim of physical violence, and one in ten of sexual violence, at least once in her life. He also stressed that gender-based violence is a crime committed not only against its victims, but it means also the destruction of future generations.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee chair Eva-Britt Svensson said that violence against women has to stop, because this is necessary to build an equal society.

EU initiatives

Spanish Minister for Equality Bibiana Aído Almagro, reiterated initiatives by the EU's Spanish Presidency to tackle gender-based violence, including the European Observatory, the EU-wide hotline to assist victims (116) and the European Protection Order.

European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding, outlined Commission initiatives, such as the gender equality strategy for 2010-2015, a legislative proposal to combat human trafficking and a specific conference on violence against women. These initiatives will complement existing instruments, such as the Women's Charter and the Daphne programme.

New hope for patients needing donor organs

MEPs voted for measures to improve the supply, safety and quality of donated organs.

The EP Public Health Committee approved two reports that seek to alleviate the organ shortage through national quality programmes and better cooperation between Member States.

Over the past 50 years organ transplantation has become an established practice worldwide and is often the only possible treatment. Yet the queues are long - about 60,000 patients are now on waiting lists in the EU - and every day 12 people die while on a list.



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National quality programmes to guarantee quality and safety of organs

The first report discussed the designation of authorities in each country responsible for quality and safety standards of human organs intended for transplantation. The report says that a competent authority can be either a public or private non-profit body, organisation or institution.

The authority will have to maintain a national quality programme covering all steps from donation to transplantation or disposal, based on rules laid down in the directive. To ease cooperation, the Commission will set up a network of authorities and establish systems to transmit information.

Fighting organ trafficking and living donors

The first report also tackles the issue of organ trafficking and living donors by stating that donations of human organs need to be voluntary and unpaid, but on the other hand, the principle of non-payment shall not prevent living donors from receiving compensation, which is strictly limited to making good the expenses and inconveniences related to the donation. MEPs decided that living donations shall be seen as subsidiary to post-mortem donations and only serve as a last resort, where no suitable alternative is available. Living donations should, in principle, be restricted to donations among close relatives and spouses.

Action Plan on Organ Donation and Transplantation (2009-2015)

In a separate draft report, MEPs welcomed a Commission Action Plan on organ donation and agreed that swapping information and best practice among Member States will help countries with low organ availability to improve their donation rates. The report says that the appointment of transplant donor coordinators is a key step towards improving donor detection and organ donation rates.

MEPs urged Member States to consider using schemes whereby citizens are given the option of joining a donor register when applying for a passport or driving licence and to consider offering on-line enrolment in national or European donors' registers. Member States are also asked to include references on national identity cards or driving licences identifying the holder as an organ donor.

... Commission



Monthly Labour Market Monitor March 2010

According to the latest Monthly Labour Market Monitor from the European Commission, the European labour market is beginning to show more consistent signs of stabilisation, half a year after the economy started to recover.



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Employment has been declining less steeply since the peak fall in the first quarter of last year, and contracted by only 0.3% in the fourth quarter of 2009 to 221 million people in work.

Equally, rises in unemployment over the last three months have been the smallest since mid-2008 and the unemployment rate remained unchanged in January 2010 at 9.5 %.

However, some further deterioration in the labour market may yet occur, as it is still too soon for the fragile pick-up in economic activity to have had much impact on the labour market at this stage.

This month's edition of the Monitor focuses in particular on recent developments in the EU's energy sector.

March 2010 Labour Market Monitor

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=120&langId=en>

...Eurostat

Employment in EU27 First estimate for the fourth quarter of 2009

The number of persons employed in the euro area (EA16) fell by 0.2% in the fourth quarter of 2009 compared with the previous quarter. In the same period, the number of persons employed in the EU27 decreased by 0.3%. In the third quarter of 2009, employment declined by 0.5% in both zones.

Falls in employment were recorded in manufacturing, construction and trade, transport & communication services. Financial services & business activities decreased by 0.1% in the euro area, but grew by 0.1% in the EU27. Agriculture increased by 0.5% and 0.1% respectively, and other services (which mainly includes public administration, health and education) grew by 0.2% in both zones.

Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, employment fell by 2.0% in the euro area and by 2.1% in the EU27 in the fourth quarter of 2009. In the third quarter of 2009, employment decreased by 2.2% and 2.1% respectively.

Over the whole of 2009, employment decreased by 1.8% in the euro area and also by 1.8% in the EU27, compared with +0.9% and +0.7% respectively in 2008.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=733&furtherNews=yes>