

Public health: Community action programme 2003-2008

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This report aims to inform the European Parliament and the Council of the implementation of the Public Health Programme in 2006.

It should be recalled that the programme's overall budget for 2003-2008 was EUR 354 million. The indicative amount for the call for proposals was EUR 43 018 510. A total of 281 applications were submitted for the three strands (121 for Health Information, 18 for Health Threats and 142 for Health Determinants). A certain number of actions were initiated either by launching calls for tenders or by using the existing framework contracts. Lastly, cooperation with international organisations was further developed. Seven

direct grant agreements were signed with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and two with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The main activities in 2006 are as follows:

Health information

- publication of a report on “**Alcohol** in Europe: A public health perspective”;
- the First European Conference on **Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion**;
- **six Eurobarometer studies** on different subjects (medical errors, AIDS prevention, food and health, tobacco attitudes, mental wellbeing, and health prevention);
- an e-Health High-Level Conference;
- the **Public Health Portal** of the European Union providing a single point of access to health-related information at European, national and regional levels;
- the “Europe for **health and wealth**” project was co-funded as part of the Presidency theme of Health in All Policies;
- a Congress “Better statistics for **Better Health for pregnant women and their babies**” in Porto;
- the European **Primary Immunodeficiencies** Consensus Conference, took place in Frankfurt-am-Main

Health threats

- the beginning of the year was marked by four fatal human cases of avian influenza in Turkey. This prompted a swift reaction by the Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and WHO, and all the response mechanisms set up in advance were activated, including sending a joint field team to assist the Turkish authorities. A new Web portal was set up to inform decision makers in Member States (HEDIS);
- measures to control a number of disease incidents notified by the EU's Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) set up by Decision No 2119/98/EC²², were coordinated by the Health and Consumer Protection DG;
- the Commission adopted a communication on prolonging the mandate of the Health Security Committee (HSC), which deals with deliberate releases of biological, chemical and radionuclear agents with the aim of causing harm;

- in order to further improve the generic preparedness of the Commission and Member States, several steps were taken to implement the lessons learnt from two simulation exercises organised in 2005.

Health determinants

- following the “Communication on combating **HIV/AIDS** within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, 2006-2009”, a high-level roundtable on safer sex for young people was set up;
- the Commission adopted a “Communication on an EU strategy to support Member States in reducing **alcohol related harm**” in October;
- the Commission continued stakeholder consultations and the impact assessment on a White Paper on **Nutrition and Physical Activity**;
- the 2005-2008 “HELP: For a **Life without Tobacco**” EU anti-smoking campaign targeting mainly adolescents (15 to 18 year olds) and young adults (18 to 30 year olds) was continued. The campaign addressed the three main themes of tobacco control (prevention, giving up, and the dangers of passive smoking) through a range of media including television and the Internet, the press and the organisation of public relations events;
- extensive public consultation on the Green paper “Promoting the **mental health** of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the EU” was held;
- the Commission cooperated with Member States and with international organisations, particularly with the WHO and its Commission on Social Determinants of Health, to promote understanding and policy development for action in the area of social determinants and health inequalities;
- preparations were started on a report on **drugs** treatment and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on drugs and prisons;
- a number of measures were taken under the EU **Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010**. An expert working group on indoor air quality was set up in October 2006.

Risk assessment

- the three Scientific Committees adopted a **wide range of opinions** covering such matters as certain hair dyes (as part of a review of possible cancer risks), the safety of sun beds, substances like organotin, the possible effects of substances released by air freshener products, the effect of electromagnetic fields on human health and the appropriateness of existing methodologies for assessing the risks of nanomaterials;
- to take account of new scientific data on **electromagnetic fields**, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) was asked to undertake a comprehensive review of the opinion of the Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Eco-toxicity and the Environment (SCTEE) on the possible health effects of electromagnetic fields, radio frequency fields and microwave radiation;
- the SCENIHR adopted an opinion on the appropriateness of existing methodologies to assess the potential risks of **nanomaterials**.