Health: Community action programme 2008-2013

2005/0042A(COD) - 22/03/2007 - Council position

The Council adopted its common position by unanimity. The common position was largely based on the Commission's modified proposal issued on 24/05/2006. (Please see the summary of that date.)

To recall, the modified proposal adapted the scope and range of actions of the programme to the substantial reduction in the programme budget resulting from the Inter-institutional Agreement on the EU Financial Framework (2007-2013) as well as to the views expressed by the European Parliament. This split the health programme from the consumer protection programme, and introduced new focuses on health inequalities, promoting healthy ageing, and addressing children's health and gender questions which reflect the European Parliament at first reading. (Please see the summary of 16/03/2006.)

The Council discussions concentrated on several specific issues concerning both the content and implementation of the programme:

- some Member States expressed reservations on substantive issues of content, such as the priority to be given to the reduction of major diseases and the work to be undertaken in improving the EU's capacity to respond to health threats, including the support to be given to networking of laboratories;

- a number of Member States wished to have more clarity on the financial mechanisms to be employed in the programme, such as how operational grants would be used, the functioning of the Programme Committee, and how the programme would be evaluated;

Ways were found to respond to the Member States reservations by making some small modifications to the text, while fully respecting the spirit of the Commission modified proposal. These included:

- adding a reference to major diseases in Article 2 in view of the European Parliament's concern about stressing reduction of major disease as a key objective of the programme;

- additional wording in Recital 32 and Article 13 to specify more precisely the nature and aims of the evaluation to be carried out;

- in Annex 1, point 1.1.1 on protecting citizens against health threats, a modification was made to clarify that the objective of the Community action was to help to strengthen Member States capabilities to support existing laboratories carrying out work with Community relevance, rather then to set up new Community mechanisms;

- in relation to the financial arrangements, the wording of Article 8 was kept unchanged, but a new Recital 33, guiding its interpretation, was added to make it clearer that Committee of the programme would be fully informed;

- in relation to operational grants to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the wording of Recital 26 and Article 4 was slightly modified to respond to Member States concerns about the scope of this provision, but the aim of the Commission's proposal was maintained.

Finally, as the co decision procedure is still continuing, it will not be possible to apply the new legal base from 2007. Accordingly, the existing legal base ((EC) 1786/2002) will be the one used to finance health

actions in 2007. As a consequence, the budget line to be used in 2007 for operational expenditure remains the same as in 2006, but an internal transfer has been made to be able to use the budget allocated to the public health programme in 2007.