

Date: **Wednesday 14 July**

Venue: **Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales**

Title: **Prague Declaration**

Purpose

This paper is to inform the Health and Social Services Committee about developments under the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA). Of particular interest are activities relating to the Prague Declaration for Health signed in 2003 and updated in 2004.

The areas covered in the declaration would seem to be of interest to Wales, although the UK do not appear to have been part of this proposed alliance to date. The UK is due to take the Presidency of EU in 2005.

Background

The EPHA is an international not-for-profit association established under formal statute in Belgium in March 1994. Its aim is to promote and protect the health interests of all people living in Europe and to strengthen the dialogue between EU institutions, citizens and non-governmental organisations in support of healthy public policies. They provide for a meeting in Prague of the General Assembly of the Membership once a year.

At the meeting held in September 2003, the Ministers of Health of 9 new member states, with participation from the Council of Europe and the World Health Organisation (Regional Office, WHO), set up a steering group of health ministers in order to co-operate more closely in the field of health and social care. The so-called Prague Declaration was signed in the presence of WHO.

The declaration included the following commitments:

- To fully endorse the conditions for mutual recognition of the qualifications of health workers and ensure the free movement of persons and services, as well as introducing a system for regulation of healthcare workers.
- Intensify national efforts to implement health promotion policies and prevention programmes against smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.
- Recommend that EU finances are set aside for special healthcare programmes to discourage patients from shopping around for healthcare treatment that puts a burden on national health resources.

The 2003 Prague Declaration was updated in April 2004 to include commitments to:

- Promote the collection, evaluation and regular exchange of comparable data on migration of patients seeking cross-border health care, while respecting the structure of health care systems in the above mentioned countries, so that appropriate measures are taken in time in cases when the health care system in a given country might be at risk.
- Contribute to creating a transparent, more effective and more rapid process of reimbursement of costs of health care provided in another member state while respecting the structure of reimbursement of health care systems of the above mentioned countries through a centre providing information and clearing services.
- Strive to create an EU network of Centres of Excellence for health care at European level, according to the criteria to be agreed as recommended in the report of the High Level Process of Reflection, of December 8, 2003.
- Encourage investment of EU Structural Funds in health, health infrastructure, and skills development in objective one areas.
- Promote and encourage responsible and healthy lifestyle and healthy living conditions.
- Acknowledge the possible impact of a continued negative population growth to the sustainability of health care and social policy schemes.
- Strive for mutual information exchange, and for timely common resolution of issues – including compensatory rest, arising from the implementation of the European Directive on Working Time in the health sector.
- Undertake to ensure that every effort is made to integrate health and social care for older persons, consistent with the principles outlined in the Report of the Social Protection Committee, which

was presented to the Spring European Council in 2003.

- Undertake to enhance the consensus in defining the educational and competency requirements of health care professionals, by supporting the principle of mutual recognition.
- Undertake, inter alia, through the proposed draft Directive on professional qualifications, to enhance co-operation between member states' regulatory bodies, dealing with mobility of health care workers, and to remove any barriers to such mobility in so far as patient safety requirements permit.
- Declare the constitution of the European Transplant Network to be the official intergovernmental organisation of participating countries, designated for mutual co-operation in the field of transplantations.

The declaration was signed by Ministers of Health from Republic of Austria, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Republic of Estonia, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Hungary, Ireland, Republic of Italy, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Malta, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Republic of Poland, Slovak Republic, Council of Europe, and the World Health Organisation (Regional Office for Europe).

Financial Implications

The Director of Resources has noted that there are no additional financial implications for the Assembly (DJS1367).

Action for the H & SS Committee

This paper is to note.

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