

# Reportage

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## Introduction

The NHS European Office, which is part of the NHS Confederation was established in September 2008 to represent NHS organisations to EU decision makers, through monitoring and engaging with EU policy and legislative developments which have an impact on the NHS as a provider and commissioner of services, as an employer and as a business.

## Introduction

This briefing gives an overview of the NHS Confederation European Office's work plan for 2009/10. The work plan builds on the successful establishment of the Office in 2008 and focuses on a wide range of EU policy and legislative proposals which are of key relevance to the NHS. The main areas of work around which the work plan is structured are presented below.

### EU policy and legislation – monitoring, information and engagement

Several EU proposals are carried forward from the 2008/09 work plan, reflecting the length and complexity of the EU decision-making process. This includes EU proposals on patient mobility, patient safety and HCAs, organ donation and transplantation, information of pharmaceutical drugs, health workforce, working time, energy efficiency of buildings, industrial pollution, and public procurement.

The work in these areas will build on the activities carried out in 2008 with the objective of continuing to promote NHS views to EU decision-makers. For those proposals which have recently been adopted, or are expected to be agreed in the course of the next few months, the focus of our work will be on informing NHS organisations with regard to implementing these policies and law.

Also included are a number of new EU developments which are expected in the course of 2009, such as EU proposals on health inequalities and on childhood immunisation. On reducing health inequalities, a European Commission Communication is expected towards the end of the year. Its aim will be to support national actions in this area through facilitating exchange of good practice between member states, improving mechanisms to monitor inequalities across the EU and advising on the availability of EU funding for specific initiatives.

An EU Recommendation on childhood immunisation practices for families taking up residence in another member state will be released in 2009. It will propose measures to address inadequate vaccination coverage for certain childhood vaccine-preventable diseases in some parts of the EU and to deal with differences in childhood immunisation schedules across Europe.

In light of recent public concerns with MMR vaccination in the UK, the NHS European Office will monitor EU proposals in this area carefully and engage as appropriate.

The NHS Confederation European Office will also look into how EU competition rules may impact on the NHS and brief NHS organisations on this as appropriate. Although no major new EU developments are expected in this area in 2009, the recent establishment of the Cooperation and Competition Panel in particular may require NHS organisations to pay greater attention to EU competition rules.

### Communication and profile raising

One of the key objectives of the NHS Confederation European Office is to ensure that NHS organisations are informed of EU affairs. Given the complexity of the NHS in terms of its scope of membership and governance structures, the European Office developed a strategy highlighting ways of communicating with the different NHS sectors and organisations in 2008. The Office will revisit and update this strategy in 2009. Action will include developing a new European Office email bulletin and continuing to meet with, and give presentations to, NHS groups.

With regard to raising the profile with EU decision-makers, the office intends to build on the successful launch event in September 2008 and continue to carry out different communication activities targeting EU decision-makers. 2009 will be marked by elections in the European Parliament and the appointment of a new European Commission. In light of this, the Office will consider a range of communication activities targeting newly elected Euro MPs and new European Commissioners.

A key focus of the profile-raising work to be undertaken in 2009 will be promoting evidence of good practice within the health service and disseminating NHS success stories. Through this work the Office aims to firmly establish and promote the high quality of NHS healthcare and to dispel perceptions that the UK may be lagging behind other EU countries in terms of the quality and safety of care provided.

### Providing information and advice on EU funding

The Office will monitor EU funding programmes and inform NHS organisations of opportunities. The programme of most relevance for the NHS is the EU Research and Development Framework Programme. This programme includes a specific health-related strand with a budget of around £6 billion for the period 2007-13, which covers research in a range of topics including specific disease areas such as cancer, respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental health, emerging epidemics, diagnostics, improving patient safety and delivery of health services.

The NHS Next Stage Review highlights a number of priorities for the NHS in innovation. The European Office will contribute to the NHS research and innovation agenda by exploring linkages with research and innovation funding opportunities at EU level.

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