European Health Care News

Newsletter No.65 – Spring 2023

Ose European Social Observatory

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1 Public health

Recommendation on cancer screening adopted with some limitations

The Council of the European Union adopted the new recommendation on cancer detection proposed by the European Commission last September. If the extension of the scope to lung, prostate and stomach cancer is confirmed, greater prominence will be given to the prerogative of the Member States in implementation. Flexibilities have thus been introduced to take account of the resources and capacities available in terms of diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

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First Country Cancer Profiles published

These profiles, published by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), are part of the European Cancer Inequalities Registry. They cover the Member States of the European Union, Norway, and Iceland, and show uneven capacity of health systems to provide free and timely access to early diagnosis, high quality cancer care and treatment.

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European Parliament calls for a stepping-up of the fight against diabetes

The European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the European Commission and the Member States to set ambitious targets to fight diabetes and improve the care and quality of life of people living with diabetes. This includes supporting the provision of person-centred care integrated across the entire care pathway, building skills in primary care and multidisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring accessibility to treatment and care.

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Review and advice on antimicrobial resistance strategies

The European Commission has published a review of the One Health National Action Plans against Antimicrobial Resistance. The report analyses Member States' strategies and provides information to identify and develop synergies in the context of the One Health approach.

The Expert Panel on Effective Ways to Invest in Health has published an opinion analysing the determinants of antimicrobial resistance, as well as strategies taken at international and European level. Recommendations are addressed to the Commission and Member States concerning how to better manage antimicrobial resistance across the health system.

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New Public Health subcommittee at the European Parliament

This Public Health subcommittee was set up under the umbrella of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). In particular, it will work on issues related to cross-border threats, pharmaceuticals and medical devices, as well as disease prevention.

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Expert group on Public Health in support of the European Commission

This new group replaces a former group focusing on non-communicable diseases and expands its focus to communicable diseases and mental health. It will support the Commission in developing strategies and exchanging best practices in these areas. A first sub-group on mental health met in February 2023.

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2 Medicines and medical devices

Extension of the transition period for medical devices

After a favourable vote in the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union also approved the amendments to the Medical Devices Regulation. The period for certifying medical devices has been extended to mitigate risks of shortages during this transition period. This extension does not change any of the performance and safety requirements provided for in the regulations.

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Establishment of four rescEU strategic reserves in the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear fields

These reserves are hosted in Croatia, Finland, France, and Poland. They are established as part of the strengthened EU Civil Protection Mechanism (rescEU) and developed with the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). The aim is to improve the European Union's preparedness and response to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats. They include critical medical countermeasures, such as vaccines and antidotes, medical devices, and specific response equipment for such incidents.

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Actions to improve preparedness for health crises

The European Commission has published its first report on health preparedness. It presents the progress made since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as new challenges. Key actions are outlined for threat assessment and intelligence gathering, as well as the strengthening of supply chains and production capacities.

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Study on the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Published by the European Parliamentary Research Service, this study aims to support the work of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic. Five areas in particular are analysed: the vaccination strategies of the EU and the Member States; vaccine effectiveness; the EU framework for crisis response; the EU's prevention and preparedness efforts for future health threats; and EU competences in public health. A series of recommendations are proposed based on the results.

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Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on vaccination

These conclusions focus on two areas: tackling vaccine hesitancy and preparing for future challenges through enhanced cooperation. The Member States and the European Commission are invited, inter alia, to strengthen the capacity of health professionals in the fight against mis- and disinformation on vaccination, as well as to take further steps to strengthen information exchange and promote joint procurement of vaccines.

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First meeting of the Immunisation and Vaccine Monitoring Advisory Board

Co-chaired by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), this multidisciplinary forum brings together representatives of national authorities and experts. It supports the activities of the Vaccine Monitoring Platform (VMP) by providing advice on the prioritisation, design, implementation and interpretation of post-authorisation studies on vaccine safety and effectiveness in the European Union.

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Recommendations to facilitate decentralised clinical trials

Published by the European Commission, the Heads of Medicines Agencies (HMA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), these recommendations aim to speed up clinical trials in the European Union, as well as to facilitate the conduct of decentralised clinical trials. An overview of the relevant national provisions is outlined in the appendix.

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Establishment of the Quality Innovation Group

Established by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), this expert group aims to support innovative approaches to the design, manufacture and quality control of medicines in the European Union.

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Fourteen Member States against the introduction of transferable exclusivity vouchers

In view of the upcoming revision of the EU pharmaceutical legislation, fourteen Member States, including the Netherlands, which initiated the initiative, and Belgium, expressed their disagreement with the amendments aimed at introducing transferable exclusivity vouchers. These allow a company producing a new antimicrobial to extend the period of market exclusivity to another product or to sell this right to another company. According to the fourteen Member States, they are an indirect and non-transparent form of financing, potentially inefficient and with significant costs for national health systems.

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Recommendations of sixteen organisations concerning the revision of the European pharmaceutical legislation

In a joint statement, sixteen organisations representing healthcare providers and professionals, patients and payers set out how the revision of the European pharmaceutical legislation should promote the affordability of high-quality medicinal products, improve the assessment of medicinal products' effectiveness and safety, and finally ensure a sufficient supply and prevent shortages of medicinal products. For its part, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) recalled the vital importance of access to medicines and the need to avoid further delays in the presentation of the revision proposal.

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Position of social protection institutions on the revision of European legislation on orphan medicines

The European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) and the Medicines Evaluation Committee (MEDEV) published a joint position on the EU legislation on medicines for rare diseases, together with a list of amendments to the current legislation. Their proposals aim to address existing market distortions and to steer research and development towards areas where needs are not being met.

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Two studies on the European model of health research and development

In view of the revision of the EU pharmaceutical legislation, the European Parliament's Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) published two studies. They identify the weaknesses of the current European model of health research and development and propose possible ways to, inter alia, improve the coordination of research within the European Union and reprioritise areas of unmet therapeutic need.

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Best practices in the public procurement of medicines

The European Commission has published a study on public procurement practices in 32 European countries. The study maps and analyses the organisation of supply for different types of medicines and in the hospital sector, the different procedures and techniques applied, as well as the impact of these practices. Finally, the study includes a set of best practices for optimising public procurement of medicines in Europe.

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Transition pathway for the chemical industry

Published by the European Commission, the pathway has been developed jointly with EU Member States, the chemical industry, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders. It defines the actions to be implemented to achieve the green and digital transition targeted by the European industrial strategy. Chemicals are at the heart of Europe's major value chains, including pharmaceuticals.

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3 e-Health

Launch of the Digital Decade policy programme

Adopted by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament, this programme sets out the objectives and targets to be achieved by 2030 in terms of digital skills and infrastructure, the digitalisation of businesses, and online public services. Among the targets is ensuring that 100% of European citizens have access to their electronic medical records. For each target, European trajectories, as well as national trajectories and strategic roadmaps will have to be developed. Multinational projects can also be developed. Progress will be monitored annually, and the first report is expected in June 2023.

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Cross-border exchange of data within public administrations

The European Commission has adopted a proposal for a Regulation and its accompanying Communication to strengthen cooperation between national administrations on data exchange and digital solutions, such as open-source software, guidelines, frameworks, and IT tools. Health data is also concerned.

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European Cancer Imaging Initiative

Launched by the European Commission, this initiative aims to create a cross-border, interoperable and secure digital infrastructure linking up oncology imaging resources and databases across the European Union. This is a flagship project of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, in line with the European Strategy for Data and the European Health Data Space.

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Common toolbox for the implementation of the digital wallet

Published by the European Commission and developed with Member States, this toolbox aims to serve as a basis for the design of the future national digital identity wallet. It should enable users to identify and authenticate themselves electronically online and offline, across the EU, in order to access a wide range of public and private services, including in the health sector. The toolbox sets out requirements and specifications, which will however not be mandatory for Member States until the legislative proposal on the EU Digital Identity Wallet has been adopted.

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Study on the accessibility of public services and online information

The European Commission has published a review of the Web Accessibility Directive, which aims to promote access to public services and online information. The results show that health services are among the most frequently accessed online services, but that the level of web accessibility is still low, especially for older people and people with a disability.

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Associations call for an expansion of the scope of the European Health Data Space (EHDS)

The Alliance for the Digitalisation of Hospitals' Medication Management Pathways, initiated and led by the European Health Management Association (EHMA), published recommendations on including medication treatment data in the EHDS. In particular, the Alliance calls for measures to ensure that all healthcare providers across the care continuum provide this type of health data.

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Draft adequacy decision for the EU-US Data Privacy Framework

Published by the European Commission, this draft sets out the conditions for the transfer of personal data from the European Union to American companies. These data include those specifying medical or health conditions used, for example, for health research and clinical trials.

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4 Internal market

Progress and possible improvements in Single Market integration

On the 30th anniversary of the Single Market, the 2023 Annual Report published by the European Commission confirms the importance of this tool to address current challenges, while highlighting the need to continuously improve its functioning, particularly in terms of integration of services and resilience of supply chains. The report also contains information on progress and challenges related to the health and healthcare sector. The 2022 Single Market Scoreboard provides an overview of how EU Single Market rules were applied across the European Economic Area.

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Professional mobility among the areas of work of the Fit for Future platform

This high-level expert group helps the Commission simplify existing EU legislation and cut red tape for the benefit of European citizens and businesses. The work programme adopted for 2023 includes eight themes, including the promotion of professional mobility. Opinions will thus be issued on the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications and the directive on a proportionality test before the adoption of new regulation of professions. Both directives cover health professionals, among others.

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5 Social policy

Adoption of the Recommendation on long-term care

The Council of the European Union adopted the recommendation to make long-term care more accessible, affordable and of better quality. Changes have been made compared to the original text proposed by the European Commission.

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Resolution on equal rights for persons with disabilities

Adopted by the European Parliament, this resolution calls for an extension of the benefits of the European Disability Card, announced by the European Commission, and for its introduction to be made mandatory for Member States. This could, inter alia, help ensure continuity of a person's ongoing rehabilitation process in the event of a change of country of residence. The Commission and the Member States are also invited to ensure accessible and high-quality healthcare for people with disabilities.

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Assessment of the national Roma strategic frameworks

As part of its 2020-2030 ten-year plan on Roma equality, inclusion and participation, the European Commission assessed the policy frameworks developed by Member States. The results show considerable variation between countries. Health is one of the four key areas to be targeted in the fight against the social exclusion of Roma people.

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Mixed results in workers' access to social protection

The European Commission has reviewed the implementation of the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed. The results show that there is considerable variation in the level of ambition of Member States, and that most of them are not aiming to close all existing gaps in access to social protection. For example, pensions, unemployment, and sickness benefits are among the most frequently targeted branches, while the others (healthcare and invalidity, maternity and paternity, accidents at work and occupational diseases) are less often addressed.

A recent report published by the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) examines in more depth one of the cornerstones of the Council Recommendation: transparency of information on social protection schemes and simplification of access to these schemes. Progress made is highlighted, as well as areas for improvement, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. The synthesis report is accompanied by national reports on 35 European countries.

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Current challenges and future vision of social protection and the welfare state

The High-Level Expert Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state analysed the challenges posed by megatrends such as demographic change or digitalisation, and their implications for the design and scope of social protection systems, as well as their financing. Twenty-one strategic recommendations are addressed to the European Union and the Member States to strengthen social protection systems in the medium and long term.

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Updated portfolio of indicators for social protection and inclusion

Since 2001, the Social Protection Committee and its Indicators Sub-Group have published indicators for monitoring progress towards the European objectives of social protection (pensions, healthcare, and long-term care) and social inclusion. This updated version reviews the new policy framework and includes all indicators adopted since 2015. In addition to general indicators, specific indicators are proposed for four areas: health and long-term care, social inclusion, pensions, child poverty and well-being.

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First meeting of the Labour Migration Platform

This platform brings together the European Commission and Member States' representatives specialised in the field of migration and employment policy. The aim is to promote labour migration from third countries to the European Union and to ensure that it is well managed and targeted at sectors, such as healthcare, where there is a need for labour and skills.

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Labour shortage analysed in the annual labour market review

In its 2022 report, the European Commission analyses the impact of the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis. The third part, however, focuses on the cyclical and structural factors that determine labour and skills shortages in the short and long term. It presents policies that can be developed to improve, among other things, training, professional mobility and working conditions. The healthcare sector is one of the sectors most affected by this shortage.

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Proposal for a Joint Employment Report published as part of the 2023 European Semester

The European Commission has published its proposal for a joint report with the Council of the EU on employment. Member States are invited, inter alia, to provide free and effective access to healthcare to all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion; to invest in healthcare system capacity, including primary care, care coordination, healthcare staff and e-health; as well as to reduce out-of-pocket payments, improve healthcare coverage and promote upskilling and reskilling of health workers.

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6 Economic policy

Launch of the 2023 European Semester cycle of economic policy coordination

The European Commission has published the autumn package of the European Semester. This includes, inter alia, the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey, opinions on the draft budgetary plans of euro area Member States for 2023, as well as policy recommendations for the euro area. The Semester process also encourages reforms in health systems.

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Post-programme surveillance reports for five countries

The European Commission's autumn package also includes post-programme surveillance reports for Member States that are under enhanced surveillance by European institutions due to their financial situation in the wake of the financial and economic crisis, namely Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain. These reports contain, inter alia, information on the reforms that Greece has introduced in the healthcare system, on healthcare expenditure incurred in Spain and Ireland, as well as on the sustainability of health systems, health services and professionals, and healthcare costs in Cyprus and Portugal.

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7 EU funding

Three new Interreg programmes for healthcare

The European Commission has announced new cross-border cooperation programmes (Interreg), three of which aim to strengthen, among other things, healthcare systems. These are the Interreg NEXT programmes established between Poland and Ukraine, between Romania and Ukraine, and between Romania and Moldova.

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Three agreements signed under the InvestEU Programme

The European Commission's InvestEU Programme aims to mobilise public and private investment in support of EU policy priorities, including in healthcare and the pharmaceutical sector. Two complementary agreements have been signed with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). The first is a guarantee agreement for the InvestEU Fund to unlock social investments. The second allows the CEB to provide advisory support to social investment projects under the InvestEU Advisory Hub. The third agreement was signed with the Nordic Investment Bank (NBI) and supports investments in research, innovation, and digitalisation in the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as Poland.

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Partnership agreement with Spain adopted

The European Commission has approved the Partnership Agreement with Spain, which will benefit from €37.7 billion. Part of the funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of primary care, to support the construction, renovation and modernisation of health centres and hospitals, and to invest in equipment for specialised care.

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Additional funding to Spain and France under the REACT-EU programme

The Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) provides funding additional to the resources Member States receive from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The additional funding will support, among other things, the strengthening of healthcare services in Spain and the construction of a health and social services centre in the French outermost region of Saint-Martin.

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Establishment of an expert group on the future of cohesion policy

Established by the European Commission, this group of high-level specialists will examine how the cohesion policy can achieve its social, economic, and territorial objectives while ensuring an inclusive digital and green transition. The first two meetings addressed the European growth model and the enhancing of resilience. The reflection focused, among other things, on the health and healthcare sector. Strategic conclusions and recommendations will be published in early 2024.

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Hungary's recovery and resilience plan approved

Following the positive assessment of the European Commission, the Hungarian Recovery and Resilience Plan was approved by the Council of the European Union. This includes a set of reforms and investments to address the challenges outlined in the country-specific recommendations issued to Hungary in 2019, 2020 and 2022 as part of the European Semester. In the healthcare sector, the plan aims to eliminate informal payments, support the digital transition, and expand primary healthcare.

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ECA's analyses on cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

In a first report, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) analyses the use of cohesion policy funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Commission is invited to analyse the impact of crisis response on the long-term objectives of this policy and to monitor the take-up of REACT-EU funds. The latter have often targeted healthcare.

In a second report, ECA compares cohesion policy funds to the RRF, including an analysis of their similarities. Member States are invited to avoid double funding and to coordinate the two instruments well. Health is one of the six pillars of the RRF.

Finally, a special issue of the ECA journal looks at the various building blocks that make up the RRF: its objective, performance aspects, funding, and control arrangements. The challenges of reporting satisfactorily to stakeholders are also discussed. Risks and lessons learned are analysed to guide future actions.

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8 Competition

Approval of a Walloon aid scheme for the health and social assistance sectors

The European Commission has approved a €32 million Walloon aid scheme to support the health and social assistance sectors in the context of the war in Ukraine, with the rising prices of natural gas, electricity, and fuel.

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Evaluation of State aid rules on services of general economic interest (SGEI) applicable to health and social services

Published by the European Commission, this evaluation confirms that the rules on SGEI applicable to health and social services are fit for purpose. However, adjustments may be necessary to simplify and clarify the existing rules, as well as to reduce the administrative burden for Member States when compensating companies providing SGEIs.

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Joint venture for the design and implementation of treatment plans for primary health care in Ireland

The Commission approved the creation of a joint venture by Irish Life Wellbeing Limited and Centric Health Primary Care Limited, companies based in Ireland which provide health insurance and primary healthcare services respectively. The joint venture will design and implement treatment plans for primary healthcare with the aim of improving patients' experience and reducing treatment costs in Ireland.

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Four new acquisitions approved by the European Commission

- The first acquisition involves the joint control of Medtronic's Renal Care Solutions business, a company active in the production and distribution of kidney care products, by DaVita Inc. and Medtronic Inc., all based in the United States.
- The second acquisition is that of Caverion Corporation of Finland by Bain Capital Investors, LLC, a US-based private equity investment firm that invests in companies from various sectors, including healthcare.
- The third acquisition involves the joint control of Kirin Techno-System Company (KTS) by Omron Corporation and Kirin Brewery, all based in Japan. KTS provides, outside the European Economic Area, inspection services for the production of various containers, including those for the pharmaceutical industry.
- The fourth acquisition involves the joint control of Sterling Pharma, based in the United Kingdom, by Partners Group of Switzerland and GHO Capital Management of the Cayman Islands.

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European Commission assessment of the proposed acquisition of Oticon Medical by Cochlear

Oticon Medical, based in Denmark, and Cochlear Limited, based in Australia, are both active in the manufacture and supply of hearing implants. The proposed acquisition was notified for regulatory clearance to Spain. This country, however, submitted a referral request to the Commission on the grounds that the acquisition could affect trade within the single market. Twelve other Member States subsequently joined this request. The Commission has accepted it and will now examine the potential cross-border effects of the transaction.

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Merger review in digital and technology markets

Conducted by an independent expert and published by the European Commission, this review analyses national case law related to merger review in the digital and technology markets. The cases studied

include mergers in the field of healthcare or having an impact on the use of health data. At the end of the report, conclusions are drawn on the evaluation of mergers in Europe.

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Fine imposed on Leadiant by the Spanish competition authority

The Pharmaceutical Accountability Foundation (PAF) welcomed the fine that the Spanish competition authority has imposed on the pharmaceutical company Leadiant for abusing its market position to overcharge people with a rare genetic disease. This follows the fines already imposed by Israel, Italy, and the Netherlands. In Belgium, the case is still pending. According to PAF, the company should be held accountable not only for abuse of competition, but also for overcharging the health system.

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9 Court of Justice of the European Union

Judgment concerning the parallel import of generic medicinal products

Cases C-253/20 and C-254/20 concern requests for a preliminary ruling from the Court of Appeal of Brussels. According to the Court of Justice of the EU, the proprietor of the trade mark of a reference medicinal product and the trade mark of a generic medicinal product may oppose the placing on the market of a Member State, by a parallel importer, of that generic medicinal product imported from another Member State, where that medicinal product has been repackaged in new outer packaging to which the trade mark of the corresponding reference medicinal product has been affixed, unless the two medicinal products are identical in all respects and the replacement of the trade mark satisfies certain conditions.

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Judgment concerning the parallel import of medicinal products

Case C-224/20 is between seven manufacturers of medicinal products and parallel importers of pharmaceutical products. The Court's judgment clarifies the interpretation of several articles of the European legislation relating to the EU trade mark, approximating the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks, and establishing a Community code relating to medicinal products for human use.

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Judgment concerning the pricing of medicinal products

Case C-20/22 concerns the interpretation of Directive 89/105/EEC relating to the transparency of measures regulating the pricing of medicinal products for human use and their inclusion in the scope of national health insurance systems. According to the Court, the concept of a 'price freeze on all medicinal products or on certain categories of medicinal products' does not apply to a measure whose purpose is to control the prices of certain medicinal products, on an individual basis.

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Judgment concerning the scope of European legislation on medical devices and medicinal products for human use

In Joined Cases C495/21 and C496/21, the Court held that the Directive on the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use applies to 'medicinal products by function' and to 'medicinal products by presentation'. In addition, where the principal mode of action of a product is not scientifically established, that product cannot meet the definition of 'medical device' or that of 'medicinal product by function'. It is for the national courts to assess whether the conditions relating to the definition of 'medicinal product by presentation' are satisfied.

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Opinion on the placing on the market of Aplidin - plitidespine

In Cases C-6/21 P and C-16/21 P, Germany and Estonia ask the Court of Justice to set aside the judgment of the General Court of the European Union by which the latter annulled the European Commission's implementing decision refusing to grant a marketing authorisation to Pharma Mar SA for Aplidin - plitidespine, a medicinal product for human use. The Advocate General proposed that the Court set aside the judgment and refer the case back to the General Court of the European Union.

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10 Infringement proceedings

Four States given formal notice regarding the reception of asylum seekers

Belgium, Greece, Portugal, and Spain have received a letter of formal notice from the European Commission for failing to transpose in a fully conform manner all provisions of the Directive 2013/33/EU. This establishes standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, including their access to healthcare.

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Three States given formal notice regarding the granting of international protection

Greece, Finland, and Portugal have received a letter of formal notice from the European Commission for failing to transpose in a fully conform manner all provisions of the Directive 2013/33/EU. This sets standards for the categorisation of third-country nationals and stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, including in relation to access to healthcare.

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Two States failing to transpose radiation protection rules

Hungary and Slovakia received a letter of formal notice and a reasoned opinion from the European Commission respectively. Hungary is invited to correctly transpose the revised Basic Safety Standards Directive regarding radiation protection (Directive 2013/59/Euratom) and Slovakia is invited to transpose the directive in full. These standards aim to ensure the highest level of radiation protection for workers, patients, and the public throughout the European Union.

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Sixteen procedures initiated on the regulation of professions

Estonia received a letter of formal notice, while Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Slovakia received an additional letter of formal notice. The European Commission is asking them to carry out a proportionality assessment before adopting professional regulation through parliamentary amendments, in line with Directive 2018/958/EU.

Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain have received reasoned opinions inviting them to transpose correctly the same Directive. This includes the regulation of healthcare professions.

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Four states failing to transpose open data rule

Belgium, Bulgaria, Latvia, and the Netherlands have been referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failing to transpose Directive (EU) 2019/1024 on open data and public sector data. Healthcare data are also covered by this directive.

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Updated method for calculating financial sanctions

The European Commission has published a Communication to update the way financial sanctions are calculated in infringement proceedings. A Member State's capacity to pay will henceforth be determined solely by its gross domestic product and population. Its institutional weight will no longer be taken into account.

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11 Miscellaneous

EU disaster resilience goals

The European Commission adopted a Recommendation and a Communication to strengthen the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and thus the capacity to respond to future emergencies. Five goals are set out: to anticipate, prepare, alert, respond, and secure. The time-horizon is set at 2027-2030 and flagship initiatives and concrete actions are planned for immediate implementation. Health emergencies are among the 16 main hazards identified. Reference is also made to maintaining essential services, including healthcare, operational during and after a disaster.

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Scientific advice for a systemic approach to crisis management

The European Commission's Scientific Advice Mechanism and the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies explored how crisis management could be improved. Recommendations are addressed to the European Commission and policy makers for a systemic and multi-sectoral approach. The values that should underpin crisis management are also described, including the prioritisation of healthcare resources in times of crisis.

DOC EN HTML

New EU Global Health Strategy

This strategy, adopted by the European Commission, positions global health as a key pillar of the European Union's external policy. It is designed to guide EU action for ensuring better preparedness and response to health threats by 2030. The three priorities are to deliver better health and well-being of people, strengthen health systems and move towards universal health coverage, and to prevent and respond to health threats.

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The impact of demographic change in a changing environment

The European Commission has published a report analysing the drivers of demographic change, as well as their impact across Europe, by discussing both long-term trends and more recent developments, notably linked to the COVID-19 epidemic. Particular attention is paid to the impact that population ageing can have on the health system.

DOC EN PDF

Quality of European statistics sufficient but with potential for improvement

The European Court of Auditors analysed the measures taken by the European Commission to ensure a high quality of European statistics, focusing in particular on three areas: health, labour and enterprise. The weaknesses reported include, among other things, gaps in health statistics, which are still incomplete and often outdated.

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A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas

In a resolution, the European Parliament calls for immediate action to address challenges in rural areas of the European Union, including access to healthcare services.

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12 Publications

Analysis of the impact of the Medical Device Regulation

In a scientific article, Shatrov and Blankart analysed the measures introduced in order to achieve the two major goals of this regulation: to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market and to define high standards of quality and safety of medical devices. In conclusion, they put forward proposals to improve further the future regulation of medical devices.

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Dynamics of European integration in the aftermath of COVID-19

In a special issue on the COVID-19 pandemic and the European Union, Eleanor Brooks and colleagues analysed developments in European health policies. The aim is to understand the dynamics of integration in the aftermath of COVID-19, as well as the reasons why Member States opted for further integration in response to the pandemic.

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Cross-border healthcare collaborations in Europe

In a scientific paper, Schmidt and colleagues studied cross-border healthcare collaborations funded by the European Union during the decade 2007-2017. The results provide an indication of the needs and interests of regional policymakers and stakeholders on the ground, comparing them with interests at EU level in this field.

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Social dialogue and collective bargaining in the hospital sector

A report published by Eurofound analyses the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in addressing the challenges created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in the hospital sector. It also examines whether existing social dialogue and collective bargaining processes at national level were adapted in order to address these new challenges.

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Health at a Glance in Europe 2022

Developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in cooperation with the European Commission, this biennial publication assesses the progress made by European countries toward effective, accessible, and resilient health systems. The 2022 edition examines in particular the challenges to be addressed to strengthen the resilience of health systems. The topics studied include the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to a wide range of health services for non-COVID patients.

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Psychosocial risks in the health care and long-term care sectors

A report published by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) highlights the main sources and factors of work-related psychosocial risks in the healthcare and long-term care sectors. In particular, it shows the deterioration of working conditions due to the use of New Public Management methods, as well as the continuing devaluation of the work done in these feminised sectors. Possible prevention and mitigation measures are discussed.

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Challenges and solutions for the healthcare workforce

The European Policy Centre (EPC) identified the challenges facing the European healthcare workforce. Recommendations are addressed to the European Union and the Member States in order to adopt a holistic approach to planning and to prepare healthcare workers for the green and digital transition.

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Social protection for people with disabilities

The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) describes and analyses the conditions under which people with disabilities aged 18 and above are granted effective access to social protection in 35 European countries. The synthesis report is accompanied by country reports.

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Consequences of a lack of transparency in the pharmaceutical industry and the European Union

Global Health Advocates, together with STOPAIDS, commissioned a series of reports exploring how a lack of transparency in the pharmaceutical industry and the European Union has harmed public health outcomes. The analysis focuses on the COVID-19 vaccine negotiations as part of the response to this pandemic. Recommendations are put forward to ensure access to medical countermeasures, transparency of European decision-making processes, and accountability in the public interest.

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"European Health Care News"
is an electronic newsletter published by the European Social Observatory (OSE), commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI).

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