

NHS European Office: Your voice in Europe

The NHS European Office represents NHS organisations to the EU. European policy and legislation are having an increasing impact on the NHS and we will continue to support the NHS in responding to the challenges this raises in 2010/11.

Looking forward to 2010/11

Key EU developments that we will seek to influence include:

Patient mobility

Negotiations continue on EU proposals aiming to clarify patients' rights to receive healthcare in other European countries and the responsibilities of health systems to facilitate and fund this. The proposals may have significant implications for the NHS in terms of finance and capacity planning. We will be working with EU decision-makers to promote NHS views on the proposals and, alongside this, providing advice to NHS organisations on current arrangements.

Quality and safety of healthcare

We are monitoring EU developments in the areas of quality and safety of healthcare, feeding in NHS experiences and ensuring that any EU proposals take account of ongoing NHS initiatives. We are also working to ensure that a forthcoming review of the Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional

Qualifications takes account of safety concerns in relation to the mobility of healthcare professionals.

Employment

We will monitor and engage with plans to review the Working Time Directive. Other priorities in this area include the revision of EU rules on minimum health and safety requirements for workers exposed to electromagnetic fields, which have major implications for the use of MRI scanners, and the revision of the existing EU law on maternity leave.

Competition and public procurement

We will provide guidance on EU competition and public procurement rules and how they apply to NHS activity, as well as advise NHS organisations on potential risks emerging from current practice.

Commercial transactions

We will continue to influence the revision of existing EU rules on late payments in commercial transactions, which could introduce tough penalties for public bodies that do not pay their bills promptly. At a time when NHS budgets are under increasing pressure, we will press for the rejection of proposals to introduce arbitrary and disproportionate penalty fees and seek to ensure a level playing field between NHS and private providers.



Environment

We are engaging with EU proposals aiming to restrict the use of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment, which may have implications for the NHS in terms of availability of certain medical devices in the future. We will also continue to press for changes to EU proposals on industrial emissions, which could have unintended consequences for around 70 NHS hospitals.

Pharmaceuticals and clinical trials

We are monitoring progress towards a revision of the EU Clinical Trials Directive which has improved the safety and ethical soundness of trials across the EU but has also contributed to a significant drop in the number of trials conducted in the UK. We will also continue to influence EU proposals on information to patients on prescription-only medicines.

Research and innovation

We will support the research and innovation agenda in the NHS through informing NHS organisations of relevant developments in research and innovation at EU level, and providing the NHS with access to successful innovative practices and experiences from across Europe. We will also advise on EU funding opportunities in this field.

Highlights of 2009/10

Influencing policy and legislation:

- shaped EU proposals on patient safety and healthcare acquired infections
- introduced changes to an EU law on energy efficiency of buildings
- responded to the EU consultation on clinical trials, and on the revision of EU law on electromagnetic fields
- modified EU proposals on quality and safety of organ donation and transplantation
- participated in an expert group on medical devices to influence future EU action in this area.

Raising the profile of the NHS:

- facilitated NHS participation in EU events to promote NHS good practice and exchange experience with counterparts across Europe
- built and maintained effective relationships with EU decision-makers, including arranging for European MPs to visit NHS organisations to showcase NHS good practice and to discuss potential implications of EU proposals on the ground.

Advising the NHS:

- assisted NHS organisations with the implementation of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in the UK, notably pressing for the use of an opt-out for hospitals allowing them to be subject to a less burdensome scheme
- advised NHS organisations on the implementation of agreed EU law, notably in public procurement, competition and cross-border healthcare
- promoted the EU Green Public Procurement Toolkit to NHS organisations to help them take environmental considerations into account when purchasing goods and services.

Facilitating NHS access to EU funding:

- influenced the priorities of the EU funding programme for research in the interest of the NHS
- provided NHS organisations with an early insight into the priorities of forthcoming calls for EU funding
- advised NHS trusts in developing project proposals.

What we can do for you

In addition to influencing EU policy in the interests of the NHS, we contribute to **NHS service improvement, leadership and innovation** through a broad range of services, including:

- providing advice on agreed EU law and assistance in preparing for its implementation
- providing information and guidance on EU funding programmes and other EU initiatives and how they can help to deliver NHS priorities
- raising awareness of the relevance of EU policy and law to the NHS
- organising study visits to learn about the impact of the EU on NHS activity and to discuss EU affairs with decision-makers
- facilitating European peer links between groups of healthcare professionals or healthcare providers
- disseminating EU studies, reports and other publications on good practice in healthcare.

Further information

To find out more about our work in 2010/11, contact Elisabetta Zanon, director, NHS European Office at elisabetta.zanon@nhsconfed.org or visit our website www.nhsconfed.org/europe.