



## **Informal Meeting of Health Ministers**

**24-25 September 2015, Luxembourg**

### **Session III:**

### ***Addressing the Health Dimension of Migration***

#### **Discussion paper**

The European Union is currently facing a humanitarian crisis of an unprecedented size and dimension. People fleeing from their countries, under inhumane and often tragic conditions, as a consequence of religious or political persecution, oppression or wars keep arriving in the European Union every day.

The refugee crisis is more than ever on the political agenda of the European Union. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, decided to devote a substantial part of his speech on the State of the Union delivered on 9 September in front of the European Parliament to the refugee crisis, calling it the first priority of action in the European Union and stressing the need for a reinforced common solidarity of Member States towards refugees arriving on their territory. A legal migration package was announced for 2016.

The health of refugees and migrants is a central aspect of the population movements, as the Portuguese<sup>1</sup>, Spanish<sup>2</sup>, Hellenic<sup>3</sup>, Italian and Latvian Presidencies have already underlined previously.

With the European Agenda on Migration presented on 13 May 2015<sup>4</sup>, the Commission mobilised 62 million euros of emergency funding, which Member States can use to support reception capacity, including healthcare. The Commission – represented by Commissioners Andriukaitis,

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<sup>1</sup> Council Conclusions on Health and Migration (December 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions on Equity and Health in all policies (June 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Discussion at the Informal Council (April 2014)

<sup>4</sup> COM(2015)214, p.6



Avramopoulos and Stylianides - expressed its willingness to put all EU tools and funds at its disposal to help the most exposed Member States provide healthcare to migrants in various letters to Ministers and Ministerial level discussions. The three Commissioners have, on various occasions, drawn the attention of Member States to existing EU funding options to provide healthcare to migrants and have encouraged ministers to provide medicines and health equipment to the most exposed Member States.

Yet, the health dimension of migration is not systematically or insufficiently addressed in recent initiatives at EU level, such as the 10-action plan and the statement of the extraordinary European Council Summit on 23 April 2015 or the Commission Communication setting out “A European Agenda on Migration” presented on 13 May 2015. In the Conclusions of the European Council of 25-26 June 2015, health is only indirectly addressed by the call to take “work forward on all dimensions of a comprehensive approach” further to the Agenda on Migration.

Today, the consequences of this crisis concern not only the Member States located at the external borders of the European Union, but all Member States. The impact of the refugee crisis on the health systems of the Member States can no longer be ignored. The refugee crisis constitutes an essential challenge for public health authorities, in terms of controlling communicable diseases, strengthening the capacities of healthcare infrastructures and reducing health inequalities.

In the short term, the focus should be on solidarity and burden sharing, providing quality healthcare to newly arriving people and guaranteeing health security of the EU population. In the longer term, public health aspects of integration in national prevention and care systems should be addressed.

As the political will to take action becomes increasingly more tangible and solid, there remains however the need to translate this commitment into coherent and co-ordinated policies where the health dimension is adequately addressed. It is of utmost importance to:

- ensure access of refugees and migrants to healthcare services adapted to their needs and at the same time protect the health of the general population;
- integrate refugee and migrant health matters into national and EU policies.



**Against this overall background, the Luxembourg Presidency would like to invite Health Ministers to discuss the following questions:**

How can EU action complement national efforts of its Member States to provide appropriate healthcare to refugees and migrants while also ensuring the health protection of the local population? Do you consider a more coherent and co-ordinated approach on migrant and refugee health at European Union level useful and, if so, how could this be achieved?