



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

pursuant to the second subparagraph of Article 251 (2) of the EC Treaty

concerning the

**common position of the Council on the adoption of a Decision of the European
Parliament and of the Council establishing a second Programme of Community action
in the field of Health (2007-2013)**

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(text with EEA relevance)

1. BACKGROUND

Date of transmission of the proposal to the EP and the Council (document COM(2005)115 – 2005/0042 (COD))	13 April 2005
Date of the opinion of the Committee of the Regions:	16 February 2006
Date of the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee	14 February 2006
Date of the opinion of the European Parliament, first reading:	16 March 2006
Date of the revised proposal of the Commission (document COM(2006) 234 – 2005/0042A (COD))	24 May 2006
Date of the political agreement in the Council	30 November 2006
Date of adoption of the common position:	22 March 2007

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

The programme aims to contribute to protecting the health and safety of citizens through specific actions in the field of health. It enables the EU to complement, support and add value to the policies of the Member States and thus contributes to increased solidarity and prosperity in the EU by protecting and promoting human health and safety and improving public health. The programme for 2007-2013 will have three main objectives: to improve citizens' health security, to promote health, and to generate and disseminate health information and knowledge.

These objectives shall be achieved through a combination of actions and instruments according to the priorities set out in the annual work plans.

3. COMMENTS ON THE COMMON POSITION

On 30 November 2006, the Council reached by unanimity a political agreement on the draft Decision establishing a second Programme of Community action in the field of Health (2007-2013). It was largely based on the Commission's modified proposal issued on 24 May 2006. The modified proposal adapts the scope and range of actions of the programme to the substantial reduction in the programme budget resulting from the Inter-institutional agreement on the EU Financial Framework (2007-2013) as well as to the views expressed by the European Parliament. This split the health programme from the consumer protection programme, and introduced new focuses on health inequalities, promoting healthy ageing, and addressing children's health and gender questions which reflect the European Parliament amendments voted in its 1st reading of March 2006.

Council discussions on the modified proposal concentrated on several specific issues concerning both the content and implementation of the programme.

Some Member States expressed reservations on substantive issues of content such as the priority to be given to the reduction of major diseases and the work to be undertaken in improving the EU's capacity to respond to health threats, for example, the support to be given to networking of laboratories.

In addition, a number of Member States wished to have more clarity on the financial mechanisms to be employed in the programme, such as how operational grants would be used, the functioning of the Programme Committee, and how the programme would be evaluated.

Ways were found to respond to the Member States reservations by making some small modifications to the text, while fully respecting the spirit of the Commission modified proposal. These included:

- adding a reference to major diseases in Article 2 in view of the European Parliament's concern about stressing reduction of major disease as a key objective of the programme;
- additional wording in Recital 32 and Article 13 to specify more precisely the nature and aims of the evaluation to be carried out;
- in Annex 1, point 1.1.1 on protecting citizens against health threats, a modification was made to clarify that the objective of the Community action was to help to strengthen Member States capabilities to support existing laboratories carrying out work with Community relevance, rather than to set up new Community mechanisms;
- in relation to the financial arrangements, the wording of Article 8 was kept unchanged, but a new Recital 33, guiding its interpretation, was added to make it clearer that Committee of the programme would be fully informed;
- in relation to operational grants to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the wording of Recital 26 and Article 4 was slightly modified to respond to Member States concerns about the scope of this provision, but the aim of the Commission's proposal was maintained.

In line with the standard approach followed for all the Community programmes for the financial programming period 2007-2013, the Council undertook a reordering of the articles of the programme

Finally, as the co decision procedure is still continuing, it will not be possible to apply the new legal base from 2007; it will therefore be ensured that the existing legal base (1786/2002/EC) will be the one used to finance health actions in 2007. As a consequence, the budget line to be used in 2007 for operational expenditure remains the same as in 2006, but an internal transfer has been made to be able to use the budget allocated to the public health programme in 2007. It will be ensured that the text of the new legal base is adjusted accordingly, namely as regards the date of implementation, duration and total budget of the new programme¹, and with the inclusion of the necessary transitional measures.

The Council common position was adopted unanimously on 22.3.2007.

4. CONCLUSION

The Commission considers that the common position is in line with the objectives and the approach of its modified proposal. The Commission will support inter-institutional efforts to find an agreement in the course of the second reading.

¹EUR 321.5 mios in current price