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Pharmaceutical Policy Cooperation between the Statutory Health Insurance Institutions in Europe

The Medicine Evaluation Committee (MEDEV)

THE FRAMEWORK

In a rapidly changing environment, trans-national partnerships are the way forward. The completion of the European Single Market and the forthcoming enlargement of the EU create a growing need for cooperation between the different social insurance systems in Europe to develop common strategies to meet the socio-economic challenges of the future. In addition, Europe's social protection model needs strong support so that it continues to provide added value for economic productivity in the coming years.

Since the early 90s the Social Insurance Institutions in Europe have carried out targeted trans-national cooperation in the framework of three Social Insurance Forums. The task of these "Euroforums" is to consolidate the concerns of social insurance general managers, to develop strategies with a European impact and to communicate these priorities to national and European decision-makers. The three Euroforums correspond to the three traditional sectors of social insurance and are the:

- European Social Health Insurance Forum
- European Forum of Insurances against Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases
- European Pension Insurance Forum

On the basis of these partnerships many European Social Insurance Institutions now form a stable network with condensed expert know-how and good institutional relationships. Under rotating national presidencies they come together in

regular plenary meetings and in special working groups according to the insurance subject.

This form of strategic cooperation between national experts is instrumental in the process of convergence of social insurance systems in Europe. The aim of the concerted effort is to ensure that social health, accident at work and pension insurance related concerns are taken into full consideration in the political decision-making processes at national and European level according to the principle of subsidiarity.

With regard to the various policy fields of Social Security, operational working units have been set up that meet regularly in Brussels and carefully monitor European developments. These committees are steered by national experts from the member organisations. The secretariat and the coordination of the work of the committees is organised by the office of the European Social Insurance Platform (www.esip.org) in Brussels. In the field of Pharmaceutical Policy Cooperation the responsible working group is the:

- *MEDICINE EVALUATION COMMITTEE
(MEDEV)*

MEDEV was established in 1998 as an official committee of the European Social Health Insurance Forum.

THE MISSION

The timely provision and discussion of information about ongoing and planned activities in the field of pharmaceutical policy at Community level and improved information flow between the national health insurance institutions are the main focus for

trans-national cooperation within the European Social Health Insurance Forum.

This cooperation is increasingly important since numerous obstacles still hinder the proper functioning of the single market for pharmaceuticals. National provisions governing marketing, prescriptions, reimbursement and prices differ from one country to another. But, sharing experiences about national developments in the pharmaceutical sector without doubt helps prepare health insurance institutions to better influence national policy making and to take appropriate measures. Additionally, to have a say in the political mainstream at Community level it is equally important that health insurance institutions receive the earliest information about drug related political and legal initiatives launched by the EU institutions.

The principal purpose of MEDEV is to provide national health insurance organisations with timely analyses about drug related trends and innovations at both national and European level.

With the overall objective of providing a necessary counterweight to the pharmaceutical industry, especially at EU level, increased participation by MEDEV in the dialogue with the European Institutions is vitally important. The aim is to support the EU's activities in formulating drug policies by giving input from the statutory health insurers' point of view. MEDEV can offer expert advice to all EU bodies from an already early stage of the pharmaceutical decision-making process and help them analyse the possible impact of drug-related policies on national health insurance schemes.

THE ACTIVITIES

MEDEV's tasks:

To fulfil MEDEV's mission, the Committee experts seek to develop common strategies that will contribute to the coordination of national drug policies by carrying out the following activities:

- ⇒ Evaluation of new drugs, e.g. joint assessment of the therapeutic value of new drugs taking into consideration pharmacoeconomic aspects
- ⇒ Definition of parameters for cost-benefit analyses and international price analyses
- ⇒ Performing comparisons of countries and systems with regard to drug benefits (evaluation of previously taken measures and development of new strategies)
- ⇒ Building up trans-national cooperations with other health insurance institutions that are not as yet members of the European Social Health Insurance Forum

- ⇒ Developing contacts with representatives of other European governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and with other international associations of health insurance agencies with regard to promoting transparent and socially acceptable pricing policies

To just wait and see what drug related decisions are taken at EU level is not an option for MEDEV. Active participation in European decision making will thus be guaranteed by initiating a structured dialogue with the European bodies concerned, especially the:

- European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products (EMA)
- European Commission: DG 'SANCO', DG 'MARKT', DG 'ENTR', DG 'RTD'
- European Parliament (EP)
- Economic and Social Committee (ESC)
- World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe

The ESIP secretariat's support:

The ongoing tasks of coordination and execution of drug policy decisions and the recommendations elaborated by MEDEV are accomplished through the shared facilities of the European Social Health Insurance Forum.

Technical and administrative support for the Committee's work is provided by the ESIP secretariat in Brussels. This support includes:

- ⇒ Observation of European policy and legal developments and pre-evaluation of relevant trends with regard to their effects on national health systems
- ⇒ Providing early information concerning:
 - Initiatives taken by the EMA
 - Jurisdiction by the European Court of Justice
 - Legislative initiatives of the European Commission
 - Opinions of the European Parliament and Economic and Social Committee
 - Opportunities for submitting position papers and for financial support provided by the European Community
- ⇒ Establishing contacts with the relevant services of the European Institutions
- ⇒ Carrying out research activities on request of the Committee members
- ⇒ Providing practical support at meetings and secretarial services

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MEETINGS

MEDEV meetings are held regularly during the
year at the ESIP offices:

**MAISON EUROPEENNE DE LA PROTECTION
SOCIALE**

**Rue d'Arlon 50
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The Committee will meet on the following dates in
2007:

15 January
12 March
21 May
24 September (Budapest)
19 November (Paris)

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