



EPHA Press release: AVIAN FLU: Tackling Avian Influenza is not part of EU leaders priorities

Brussels, 13 February 2006. **Highly pathogenic Avian Flu has now been found in several EU countries. Once again, Europe is faced with the need to tackle an animal disease which may infect and kill millions of people. But EU leaders in December 2005 decided to ignore their citizens' health when they reached an agreement on the EU budget. As a consequence, the European Union will have neither the technical capacity nor financial resources to tackle a flu pandemic.**

The budget deal for the period 2007-2013 agreed by national governments was much lower than the overall budget requested by the European Commission and supported by the European Parliament.

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), which represents more than 100 NGOs working on health or health-related issues in Europe, is particularly concerned by the lack of awareness or understanding by key EU decision-makers about the impact of the budget agreement on health.

“As Europe faces up to the threat of potential flu pandemic, it is clear that communicable diseases don't stop at national borders. Despite the rhetoric from Heads of State that governments will work together in a coordinated manner, they clearly decided NOT to equip the EU with the financial means to protect the health of their citizens”, states Lara Garrido-Herrero, Secretary General of EPHA.

Specifically funding for health and consumer issues was set at just 1% above 2004 figures and frozen for the entire 7 year period. This means that according to some initial calculations the 80 million Euros per year that is currently being spent on these policies will **drop to about 37 million Euros. The reality is that spending on Health and Consumer policies will actually be lower in 2007 than in 2004 and every year the value of the budget will be less because it is not adjusted for inflation !**

Most notably, the budget freeze on health also impacts on two key European agencies: the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The newly established European Centre for Disease Control will have to take on a key role in monitoring health threats and coordinating an effective response. Both of these Agencies work on issues that are highly visible, with significant political and economic impacts. They also need to be able to respond quickly and effectively to emergency situations and are in the frontline of health and consumer protection. Therefore, it is likely that both agencies will face increased financial needs during the budget period, particularly the ECDC.

“Health is consistently identified as a top priority for Europeans but the budget decision by the Council



severely limits the European Union's ability to cope with emerging health threats, to combat health inequalities or tackle the wider determinants of ill health", regrets Lara Garrido Herrero. She also adds that "the reduced budget means that difficult decisions will have to be made about what type of activities the EU can realistically undertake to promote public health. A wide range of projects and networks currently being supported at EU level are facing an uncertain future".

The European Public Health Alliance is calling upon Members of the European Parliament to restore balance to the EU budget by increasing the overall funding for Heading 3b and allocating an appropriate level of resources for the health and consumer interests of citizens.

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Notes to the editor

1. The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) represents over 100 non-governmental and other not-for-profit organisations working in support of health in Europe. EPHA aims to promote and protect the health interests of all people living in Europe and to strengthen the dialogue between the EU institutions, citizens and NGOs in support of healthy public policies. <http://www.epha.org>

2. Conclusions of the Council agreement in December 2006:

http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/misc/87677.pdf

3. Letter of the director of EFSA to the President of the European Parliament expressing serious concerns: http://www.efsa.eu.int/mboard/correspondence/1328_fr.html

4. More information on the EU budget: <http://www.epha.org/a/2079> and <http://www.epha.org/a/1764>

5. Details of the calculations available in the attached fact sheet '*No health-No wealth!*'

- 450 million EU citizens
- 25 Member States
- Total amount for Heading 3b – 520 million Euros per year
- Pro-rata proportion for health and consumer programme : 959 million Euros over 7 years
- 2 EU Agencies - the ECDC and EFSA: 700 million Euros (ie 100 million Euros per year)
- Remainder for the Health and Consumer programme: 259 million Euros over 7 years
- Average budget per year for Health and Consumer issues: ~ 37 million Euros per year
- = ~ **0.082 cents per citizen per year for Health and Consumer issues together**
- Including the Executive Agency to manage the programmes