



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Public Health and Risk Assessment
Health information

NOTE TO HEALTH INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Subject: Healthy Life Years (HLY) and the European Health and Life Expectancy Information System (EHLEIS)

Life expectancy and HLY in 2007: Life expectancy (LE) at birth has steadily increased during the last decade in the EU27, by more than 3 years for men and 2 years for women. Substantial gaps between MS however remain and have reached 14 years for men and 8 years for women in 2007. With this accelerated population ageing, the quality of remaining years becomes as, or more important than, the quantity. The Healthy Life Years (HLY) indicator is a summary measure of population health (SMPH) measuring the number of remaining years that a person is expected to live free of disability. Its most recent values for 2007 show differences of 20 years between MS, even larger than gaps in LE.

These new results are commented in details in the third issues of the Country reports which will be presented at the Health Information Committee meeting of March 30, 2010, by the European Health and Life Expectancy Information System (EHLEIS). The Project EHLEIS which ends in June 2010 will be replaced by a Joint Action which was submitted to the 2010 Call for proposals.

The new Joint Action EHLEIS: The general objective of this Joint Action (JA) is to increase the utility of HLY for EU public health through the consolidation and further development of the existing information system developed by EHLEIS (2007-2010), increased comparability with US and Japanese SMPH and greater use by MS of HLY in national policy-making. More specifically the JA will: (i) compute and disseminate HLY through an online information system, annual country reports and website, (ii) monitor EU trends in LE and HE to identify public health priorities, (iii) develop methods for computing comparable HE by socio-economic status, (iv) contribute towards identifying the main determinants of healthy life in Europe, (v) develop MS capacity to compute and use HE for national policy-making, and (vi) integrate the former Task Force on Health Expectancies (TFHE) into an annual meeting to further engage MS with HLY.

Target groups – MS in general, health and non-health policy makers at MS and EC level, health professionals and researchers as well as the media and general public.

Strategic relevance – Key cross-cutting EU policies such as the Lisbon agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy include HLY within their list of indicators. In 2005 the Commission stated that “increasing HLY is crucial in attracting people into the labour market” (COM 2005/24). More HLY means a healthier workforce, less retirement due to ill health and potentially less health and social care use and is thus a means of reducing the economic and social risks associated with demographic change. Accurate monitoring of HLY across MS is crucial to plan for our ageing population but also to understand the impact of national policies to increase healthy ageing.

Contribution to the programme – The JA will contribute directly to two of the three objectives of the Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health 2008-2013: to promote health, including the reduction of health inequalities – specifically increasing healthy life years and promoting healthy ageing; and to generate and disseminate health information and knowledge.

Expected outcome - The main outcomes will be: (i) an Information System allowing online calculation of various health indicators (prevalence, LE and HE) – all current HLY-related websites will be reorganized in a new EHLEIS website, (ii) annual Country reports on health expectancy translated into national languages, (iii) proceedings of the annual meetings to replace the TFHE, (iv) new statistical tools for attribution and decomposition, (v) Web posted training material, (vi) technical reports and scientific papers on key methodological advances and substantive comparative results.

Action for the Committee:

X	For information
	For comments
	For agreement