

First ERN Project managers meeting in Brussels to share common operational and governance issues

New services are at the disposal of European Reference Networks (ERNs) project managers, who met in Brussels for the first time on 5th March. eTranslation can now be used for rough translation of ERN texts. The Project managers discussed important issues of their work as well as administrative aspects. The meeting was hosted by DG SANTE and CHAFEA (Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency), who provided input and clarifications concerning the running of the current grants and other support activities, including additional financial support mechanisms. The exchanges focused also on operational capacity building to strengthen Project managers' ability to manage their daily tasks and meet the numerous challenges ahead for the management of such ambitious and huge networks.

In the morning session, Project managers had the opportunity to discuss amongst themselves issues of common interest, including the engagement and involvement of the ERNs members, the understanding of the monitoring measures; the management of the ERN finances; their experiences with data collection and how to improve patient involvement.

In the afternoon, CHAFEA, responsible for the management of the Health programme grants to the ERN, provided the Project managers with information on the grants process and the related administrative procedures, including reporting and payment issues.

DG SANTE addressed operational aspects related to the daily work of the Network, particularly the perspective of enlargement with the Affiliated partners and the future call to join existing ERNs; the monitoring process to track results and achievements of the networks or the actions put in place to support specific registries for ERNs. The participants also discussed the activity of the Working group on Training and education or how best to engage the Networks' participants, as well as to involve further patients in the ERNs activities. DG SANTE agreed to provide information on eTranslation possibilities and to strengthen the Project managers' participation in the IT platform set up for the internal ERN community (ECP – ERN Collaborative Platform) through a devoted communication space.

All participants agreed the meeting was a good opportunity to clarify many operational and administrative aspects, besides the possibility for Project managers to meet each other and discuss with the Commission and CHAFEA representatives. Further meetings, on financial reporting, future calls and operational sustainability of the ERNs were flagged.