



Press Release

EU action on skin diseases

(Brussels, 26/05/2009) Skin diseases pose a significant burden on public health in Europe. It is estimated that at least one quarter of individuals have a skin disease at any one time. The range of these conditions is wide, including inflammatory and infectious processes and cancers such as malignant melanoma. The incidence and prevalence of these conditions are constantly changing, reflecting many variables.

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, EU Commissioner for Health states in the latest EADV News:

Thus, understanding the epidemiology of these disorders is essential to more efficiently prevent and tackle skin diseases across the European Union.

The European Commission is currently supporting two projects related to skin diseases within the framework of the Public Health Programme: the quantification of sun exposure in Europe and of its effects on health (EUROSUN) and the European Prevention Initiative for Dermatological Malignancies (EPIDERM).

Moreover, the prevention of cancer is a longstanding objective of the European Union. The *European Code against Cancer* sets out recommendations to improve general health and avoid certain cancers by adopting a healthier lifestyle. One code item explicitly aims to prevent skin cancer. It recommends that care should be taken to avoid excessive sun exposure, in particular for children and adolescents and those individuals who have a tendency to burn in the sun.

This year, we are planning to set up a *European Partnership for Action Against Cancer* to support the Member States in their efforts to more efficiently tackle cancer by providing a framework for identifying and sharing information, capacity and expertise in cancer prevention and control and by bringing together relevant stakeholders across the EU in a collective effort to address cancer.

Key areas for future cancer activities include: primary prevention; identification and promotion of good practice in cancer-related healthcare; priorities for cancer research; health information; and collection and analysis of comparable data.

The manufacturing and distribution of consumer products is regulated by Community law in order to reduce any risk to health from their use. Evidence on such risks is regularly reviewed by independent scientific committees, bringing together experts from across the EU, such as the Scientific Committee on Consumer Products (SCCP). The SCCP has recently performed a scientific evaluation of the possible health implications of sun beds and UV radiation.

In addition, efforts to tackle the burden of skin diseases in the home and at work are an important component of the work of the two EU agencies, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living



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and Working Conditions and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. The latter agency produced a report on occupational skin diseases and dermal exposure in the EU, last year.

In the area of venereology the European Commission has been following up on the epidemiology of sexually-transmitted diseases (STD) for a long time. In its 2008 report on communicable disease surveillance in Europe the current data on the surveillance of STD are published by the European Agency for Communicable Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), based in Stockholm, Sweden. This is accompanied by the Community action on STD surveillance “Sexually-Transmitted Infections Surveillance in Europe” (ESSTI).

As regards specific European policies on the prevention of Human Immunodeficiency Virus infections, a Commission Communication on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, has been published in the Official Journal in December 2005 and a new Communication is currently being prepared by the European Commission.

Specialists in skin and venereal disease are key front-line partners in European efforts to prevent and tackle skin and sexually-transmitted diseases.

Your role is vital in emphasizing the importance of preventing skin and sexually-transmitted disease, such as bringing home to the European citizen the message of the European Code against Cancer as well as the knowledge and recommendations on sexually-transmitted disease prevention. Together we can help to reduce the impact of skin and venereal disease on the lives of citizens throughout the European Union.

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