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The Finnish EU Presidency

Author:

Alpo Rajaniemi

Accounting Manager, Hospital District of South West Finland and country correspondent for Hospital

E-mail: Alpo.Rajaniemi@tyks.fi

Sources: Local and Regional

Government of Finland

Further information:

<http://www.government.fi/eu/suomi-jaeu/2006/en.jsp>

Source: Speeches of The Minister of

Social Affairs and Health, Liisa Hyssälä

Finland's six-month EU Presidency began on 1 July 2006. As part of its programme, Finland is organising a high-level conference on the theme of "Health in All Policies" in September 2006. During the informal meeting, to be held in early July, the social, health and employment ministers will discuss health in the world of work, including health promotion and protection. Discussions will take place on how to meet the challenges of demographic change and globalisation in working life.

Drug Prevention

Another important presidency theme is drugs, where the importance of preventing diseases linked to drug abuse, and in particular the prevention of HIV/AIDS, will be underlined. Finland will organise a conference on drugs, which will concentrate on promoting a constructive dialogue, providing information and sharing experiences between drug policy authorities and thus improving the effectiveness of drug prevention, drug treatment and the prevention of drug related infectious diseases. Cooperation between the social, health and police authorities in the drug field is a central part of the programme. Increasing drug use requires joint and coordinated actions by all relevant sectors and authorities. The conference is addressed to the Member States of the European Union, accession and applicant countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey) and the EU's eastern neighbours namely the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus who will also be invited to the conference. Dialogue between the EU Member States and neighbouring countries is expected to promote cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours, which is crucial for the reduction of drug problems on the continent.

Finland has drawn up a national contingency plan for avian flu and a national preparedness plan for an influenza pandemic. Finland is well prepared for H5N1- viruses appearing in wild birds during spring 2006. It seems clear that the bird pandemic threat will not be the main theme during the EU Presidency when discussing healthcare issues.

Finland will be working closely with the European Commission and forthcoming presidencies of

the EU in order to continue the mutual work after the conference, and to maintain the achievements of the conference for future cooperation.

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