



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL CARE

Document: Invitation to the first meeting of the High Level Group (example)	
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Action: For response and attendance.	



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Director-General

SANCO

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Brussels,
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Professor Reinhart Waneck
Secretary of State
Federal ministry for Health and
Women
Radetzkystrasse 2
A-1030 Vienna
Austria

Dear Professor Waneck,

Subject: Invitation to launch a high level group on health services and medical care: 1 July 2004

I am writing to invite you personally to take part in the work of a new Group that the Commission is bringing together. The aim is to improve top-level official coordination among EU members on a broad range of health issues. I have been asked by Commissioner Byrne to chair the process, and I would be very pleased if you would join me in launching our work, in Brussels on 1 July.

In order for cooperation to be effective and to respect the responsibilities of the Member States for health services and medical care, this Group will depend on the active engagement of the senior officials responsible for these issues from Member States. The Group should, with your support, be able to bring two important changes to what we have done together so far: first, to raise the level of our cooperation on a sustained basis, and second to ensure that we are all working together on a broader set of issues than in the past. This will provide a basis for as effective and sustained a network between senior officials across Europe as already exists in other fields, but without any impact on national responsibilities for health systems.

The decision establishing the Group follows the conclusions of last year's high level reflection process on patient mobility and healthcare developments in the European Union. As you know, the reflection process considered a range of issues including European cooperation to enable better use of resources; information requirements; access to and quality of care; reconciling national health policy with European obligations; and responding to enlargement by investing in health. This Group is intended to provide a structured way for taking forward the issues identified by the reflection process, in response to the recommendation calling for a 'permanent mechanism' to support European cooperation in the field of health care.

Our working methods should be quite collegial and informal. In the spirit of the reflection process, I would envisage representatives of individual Member States taking the lead on topics of interest to them. The reflection process has already set out a challenging set of issues; we should aim to strike a balance between immediate practical issues (such as health technology assessment or clarifying data protection rules for the health sector) and longer term questions (such as medical workforce planning and developing proper information systems). We may also be able to pool our thinking on long-standing uncertainties over how Community rules should be applied in practice in the health area, such as the concept of undue delay. Our meetings at senior level should take place two or three times a year as necessary, and would also be supported by meetings of deputies who could look at issues in more detail where necessary, involving relevant experts.

Please let me know if there are any topics which you see as a particular priority; we will then circulate a more detailed agenda nearer the first meeting, which I would like to convene on the afternoon of 1 July 2004, in Brussels. We will not be able to provide interpretation for all official languages, but we will aim to provide at least English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Polish.

The reflection process represented a milestone through its recognition of the potential value of European cooperation in helping Member States to achieve their health objectives. The High Level Group on health services and medical care provides a mechanism for translating this political momentum into concrete progress, and represents an opportunity to ensure that consideration of these issues at European level is taken forward effectively. I hope that I can count on your active participation, and I look forward to working together with you.

I would be grateful if by the end of May you would let me know of your participation and of any thoughts you may have as to the work plan. Please feel free to contact me direct by phone or email to discuss the project, or to contact Fernand Sauer (who will chair the Deputies format) or Nick Fahy (who will act as our secretariat at the Commission end).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Madelin', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Robert Madelin

Enclosures: Commission Decision of 20 April 2004 setting up a High Level Group on Health Services and Medical Care (C(2004) 1501)