



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Library Service Briefing Paper

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# European Commission Work Programme 2010: Health, Social Services and Public Safety

## Introduction

1. The Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister's '*Report on its Inquiry into Consideration of European Issues*', which was published in January 2010, contained a series of recommendations addressed to the Executive together with a number of actions which were for the Assembly itself to address. Action 8 of the report stated that:

*The Committee [COFMdFM] will highlight to all statutory committees the importance of their role when dealing with European issues and departments should take into consideration European policies and directives when completing business plans and strategies. Research and Library Services will screen the annual European Legislative and Work Programme and produce a prioritised menu of scrutiny topics relevant to each statutory committee. For those scrutiny topics which are of particular interest to statutory committees, the Research and Library Service should monitor the development of policy at European level and provide*

*regular information updates which would, amongst other things, identify all relevant draft legislative acts. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will receive all information from Research and Library Services. The Brussels Officer will also have input here.*

2. Action 8 requires the Research and Library Service to support Committees by:
  - i. screening the annual European Legislative and Work Programme;
  - ii. producing a prioritised menu of scrutiny topics relevant to each statutory committee;
  - iii. monitoring the development of policy at European level;
  - iv. providing regular information updates; and
  - v. identifying all draft legislative acts.
3. This briefing paper contains the results of an initial screening of the work programme to identify initiatives contained in the European Commission's 2010 work programme which relate to the work of the Committee for Health, Social Services & Public Safety.

### **European Commission Work Programme 2010**

4. Each year the European Commission publishes a work programme which sets out the legislative as well as non-legislative proposals which it will put forward during the forthcoming year. The work programme, which is usually published in the Autumn, is particularly important, as the Commission has the 'right of initiative' within the European Union. In other words, the Commission alone is responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, which it presents to Parliament and the Council. The Commission is also responsible for managing and implementing EU policies and the budget. Furthermore, together with the Court of Justice, it is responsible for making sure EU law is properly applied in all the member states.
5. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, the European Commission published its 2010 Work Programme for which it provided the following overview:

*The Commission Work Programme (CWP) 2010 translates the priorities of President Barroso's political guidelines into concrete actions. Overall, emphasis of the CWP is on (1) putting the Europe 2020 Strategy into practice thereby building the basis for exiting the economic crisis and creating sustainable growth and jobs (2) enhancing the rights and security of European citizens and (3) strengthening Europe's role on the world stage.<sup>1</sup>*

6. Notably, the format of the 2010 work programme differs from that of previous years' legislative and work programmes. For the first time, the work programme provides a

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm)

four-year rather than an annual overview of the Commission's legislative and non-legislative priorities. This format is designed not only to improve predictability for all stakeholders, but also to facilitate cooperation with the other EU institutions. Through annual updates of the Work Programme, the Commission will identify new annual strategic initiatives and adapt the multiannual strand as necessary.

7. Whilst the body of the Work Programme describes the Commission's ambitions and commitments for 2010 and beyond, a number of annexes provide detail on individual initiatives which it plans to take forward.
8. Under the following headings, Annex I contains a list of 34 strategic initiatives on which the Commission commits to deliver in 2010.
  - Tackling the crisis
  - Advancing the "Europe 2020" flagship initiatives
  - Tackling Europe's bottlenecks
  - Putting people at the Heart of European action and building a citizens' Europe
  - Ensuring an open and secure Europe
  - Addressing long-term societal changes
  - Deepening Europe's trade agenda
  - Modernizing EU instruments and the ways of working
9. Annex II contains a list of 280 major proposals under consideration during 2010 and beyond, which are tentative prospects for the rest of the mandate. These are broken down under the following headings, which map closely to the Departments and Services of the European Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture and Rural Development	Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Response
Budget	Industry and Entrepreneurship
Climate Action	Internal Market and Services
Competition	Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship
Development	Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Digital Agenda	Regional Policy
Economic and Monetary affairs	Research and Innovation
Education, Culture and Youth	Services of general interest
Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion	Smart Regulation
Energy	Taxation and Customs Union
Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy	Trade
Environment	Transport
<b>Health and Consumers</b>	
Home Affairs	

10. A list of simplification proposals and withdrawals is included as Annexes III and IV to the Work Programme.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'Commission' is used within the European Union in two senses. First, it refers to the team of men and women from Member States appointed to run the institution and take its decisions. Secondly, the term 'Commission' refers to the institution itself and to its staff.

11. The remainder of this paper identifies those initiatives contained in Annexes I and II which are most relevant to the work of the Committee for Health, Social Services & Public Safety.

### Strategic initiative(s) the Commission is committed to adopt in 2010

Nature of initiative	Title of the document	Likely date of publication
<i>Communication</i>	Reinforcing the European Union's Disaster Response Capacity	4th quarter 2010
<p>The Commission has triggered a significant strengthening of EU coordination on humanitarian assistance over the last three years on policy issues and specific humanitarian situations.</p> <p>The EU has a firmly established reputation as the world's largest donor of official humanitarian aid, not including the important contributions from EU citizens to humanitarian aid organisations. European civil protection cooperation has developed rapidly since the establishment of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism in 2001, through which the EC Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) facilitates and supports the deployment and coordination of Member States' assistance in the event of major emergencies inside and outside the EU.</p> <p><i>This Communication will set out options to reinforce the EU Disaster Response and preparedness capacities inside and outside the Europe, covering three main building blocks: civil protection, humanitarian aid and increased civil-military cooperation.</i></p>		

### Indicative list of possible strategic and priority initiatives under consideration (the initiatives listed cover 2010 and beyond; see Appendix 1 for further details)

Nature of initiative	Description
<i>Directive (Amendment)</i>	Tobacco Products Directive concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco products
<i>Directive (Amendment)</i>	Review of Regulation on official controls along the food chain
<i>Directive (Amendment)</i>	Clinical Trials Directive
<i>Proposal</i>	Directive/Regulation concerning Medical Devices
<i>Directive (Amendment)</i>	General Product Safety Directive
<i>Directive (Amendment)</i>	Directive revision relating to transparency of measures regulating the pricing of medicinal products for human use and their inclusion in the scope of national health insurance systems
<i>Proposal</i>	Recommendation on Joint Programming on Health, food, and prevention of diet-related diseases.
<i>Communication</i>	Pandemic preparedness
<i>Recommendation</i>	Pandemic influenza preparedness and response planning in the EU

12. It is proposed that, to support the work of the Committee for Health, Social Services & Public Safety, the Health Research Team will monitor development of the initiatives of the 2010-2014 work programme identified above. The Team will also monitor the development of any new policy proposals, legislative or otherwise, in these broad areas.

13. At a later date, should it become necessary to prioritise these for continued monitoring, the criteria listed below could be employed:
  - Legislative versus non-legislative proposal (legislative higher priority)
  - Stage in policy development (earlier higher priority)
  - Relevance (links to other committee work for example)
  - Significance (based on likely impact, for example financial, of initiative in NI)
  - Relevance to Executive's Priorities for European Engagement<sup>3</sup>
14. In addition to updating the Committee directly via the Committee Clerk, the Research & Library Service's online current awareness tool 'HORIZON' will be used to disseminate information on developments more widely.
15. A number of the key initiatives identified are legislative proposals, and will therefore be subject to a subsidiarity check which is triggered by draft legislation.<sup>4</sup> Emerging policy developments in the areas highlighted above will also be monitored closely to identify any draft legislative acts that may emerge at a later date.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ofmdfni.gov.uk/priorities\\_for\\_european\\_engagement-action\\_plan\\_2008-2009\\_\\_3mb\\_-2.pdf](http://www.ofmdfni.gov.uk/priorities_for_european_engagement-action_plan_2008-2009__3mb_-2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Article 5 of the Lisbon Treaty means that National Parliaments become guardians of the principle of subsidiarity, which is formulated to ensure that the EU only acts within the limits of the powers conferred on it by the Member States.

**Appendix 1:**

Further details of possible strategic and priority initiatives under consideration are provided below:

**Tobacco Products Directive**

Substantial developments in tobacco product regulation have taken place that requires an update of the Directive. There are still differences between the Member States' laws and other provisions on the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco products. Changes of the Directive should be used to better target young people and vulnerable groups.

**Review of Regulation on official controls along the food chain**

A review is on-going with reference to the rules, on the financing of official controls ("inspection fees"). These rules have not been able to deliver on the main objective of the legislation i.e. that Member States have adequate financial resources to efficiently carry out the needed official controls and that the scarce public resources for controls are allocated and used as efficiently as possible.

**Clinical Trials Directive**

The objective is to amend the Directive on clinical trials in order to address a number of identified shortcomings in order to provide a modern regulatory framework adapted to practical requirements, constraints, and needs, without compromising the safety, well-being and rights of clinical trial participants.

**Regulation concerning medical devices**

The objective is to simplify and strengthen the rules in order to ensure a high level of health protection while at the same time ensuring a smooth functioning of the internal market.

**General Product Safety Directive**

Recurrent product safety alerts have demonstrated the need for a system that delivers more rapidly, efficiently and consistently throughout the EU, and which is also flexible enough to adapt to the challenges of globalisation. In addition, the New Legislative Framework (NLF) for harmonised products requires that certain alignments are made in the General Product Safety legislation, to ensure efficient compliance, market surveillance and enforcement.

**Regulating the pricing of medicinal products for human use and their inclusion in the scope of national health insurance systems**

The foreseen review will examine ways to adapt the requirements of the directive in order to improve the functioning of the internal market for medicines, taking into consideration the development of national pricing and reimbursement policies.

**Joint Programme on 'Health, food, and prevention of diet-related diseases'**

The theme related to health, food and prevention of diet related diseases was identified as a major societal challenge for Europe which needs to be tackled through a Joint Programming Initiative.

**Pandemic Preparedness / Pandemic influenza preparedness and response planning in the EU**

This initiative will support the effectiveness and efficiency of European healthcare system and help coordinate Member states reactions to human pandemics. It will thus contribute to reducing the impact on society, increasing stability and preventing unnecessary loss to the economy. Trans-boundary spread of pandemic influenza and the need of congruency of Community preparedness planning in line with WHO guidance are key reasons why this initiative is necessary.