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SANT Committee Constituted

European Parliament

The first standing committee of the European Parliament on Public Health was constituted as fully-fledged Committee on 29 January 2025.

Adam Jarubas (EPP, PL) was elected as the inaugural Chair of the European Parliament newly established Committee on Public Health. MEPs also elected Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, LU) as the Committee's First Vice-Chair, with Ms Stine BOSSE (RENEW, DK), Ms Romana JERKOVIĆ (S&D, HR) and Mr Emmanouil FRAGKOS (ECR, EL) chosen to serve as Second-, Third- and Fourth Vice-Chairs respectively.

Together with Mr Jarubas, they form the new committee's decision-making bureau.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Jarubas said that he 'was honoured to be re-elected Chair of the SANT subcommittee' and was committed to tackling the 'long list of urgent issues, to meet our citizens' expectations.'

The Chair of SANT: Mr Adam Jarubas, MEP

The Chair underlined the importance of motivating member states to 'finalise their position' so that work on the 'largest reform of EU medicines market in over twenty years, the pharmaceutical package' can be completed; this, in tandem with the EU's Beating Cancer Plan, the construction of 'strategies for cardiovascular diseases, related diabetic diseases and neurodegenerative diseases,' the Mental Health Action Plan and 'proper implementation of the European Health Data Space' using cutting-edge AI algorithms would continue 'the aim of eliminating health inequalities both among and within EU countries' with Mr Jarubas affirming that 'health may depend on DNA code, but it must not depend on postal code.'

Commission Unveils Action Plan to Protect the Health Sector from Cyberattacks

On January 15th, the European Commission unveiled its Action Plan to bolster the cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers. This Action Plan was announced in President von der Leyen's political guidelines as a key priority within the first 100 days of the new mandate, and follows the broader initiative for a European Health Data Space

The action plan proposes, among others, for ENISA, the EU agency for cybersecurity, to establish a pan-European Cybersecurity Support Centre for hospitals and healthcare providers, providing them with tailored guidance, tools, services, and training. The initiative builds on the broader EU framework to strengthen cybersecurity across critical infrastructure and marks the first sector-specific initiative to deploy the full range of EU cybersecurity measures.

In a nutshell, the action plan focuses on four priorities:

- Enhanced Prevention. The plan helps to build the healthcare sector's capacities to prevent cybersecurity incidents through enhanced preparedness measures such as guidance on implementing critical cybersecurity practices. Secondly, the Member States may also introduce Cybersecurity Vouchers to provide financial assistance to

micro, small, and medium-sized hospitals and healthcare providers. Finally, EU will also develop cybersecurity learning resources for healthcare professionals.

- Better detection and identification of threats. The Cybersecurity Support Centre for hospitals and healthcare providers will develop an EU-wide early warning service, delivering near-real-time alerts on potential cyber threats, by 2026.
- Response to Cyberattacks to minimise impact. The plan proposes a rapid response service for the health sector under the EU Cybersecurity Reserve. Established in the Cyber Solidarity Act, the Reserve provides incident response services from trusted private service providers.
- Deterrence: Protecting European healthcare systems by deterring cyber threat actors from attacking them. This includes the use of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, a joint EU diplomatic response to malicious cyber activities.

The Action Plan will be implemented hand in hand with healthcare providers, Member States, and the cybersecurity community. To further refine the most impactful actions so that patients and healthcare providers can benefit from them, the Commission will soon launch a public consultation on this plan, open to all citizens and stakeholders.

Report on CEPLIS' Meeting with EU Commission DG of Health

CEPLIS Director General, Dr Theodoros Koutroubas, accompanied by our Policy Advisor Jr., Mr Brookly Beli, had a fruitful meeting with Ms Maya Matthews, Head of Unit C2, and Dr Petronille Bogaert, of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, at their premises, on January 16, 2025. Both CEPLIS and the DG for Health expressed the wish for a closer collaboration given the numerous possibilities created by recent initiatives set by the EU Commission for health professionals.

Our Director General, presented the work of CEPLIS and of several of its members on TeleCare and discussed our positions on digitalisation, AI and ethical standards. **CEPLIS was able to gain a lay of the land regarding EU initiatives on digitalisation of the healthcare sector: whilst healthcare associations are indeed involved in the area of digigrowth, health legislation regarding telehealth currently does not exist at the EU level. The focus at the moment is on key areas owing to a lack of funding such as, for example, the pre-existing initiative: Nursing Action. This initiative has the goal of creating tailored policies for individual countries; the Commission's officers stated that participation in the initiative in question could be beneficial to some of our members. Further talks were recommended to be held regarding the ongoing training the DG has set up on digital skills, allowing the possibility of merging with the EU's Be Well scheme, with various opportunities being sent to us soon.**

The meeting ended with Dr Koutroubas bringing up the topic of mobility and how it is of huge concern for healthcare professionals, especially those interested in CTF. The representatives of the Directorate-General were responsive to our positions and indicated their interest in further synergetic work to ensure that the EU can facilitate and deliver better conditions and modernisation of healthcare within the bloc.

Commission publishes the Guidelines on Prohibited Artificial Intelligence (AI) Practices

European Commission

The European Commission has published guidance explaining a series of bans on usage of artificial intelligence that took effect on Sunday the 2nd February; these guidelines provide an 'overview of AI practices that are deemed unacceptable due to their potential risks to European values and fundamental rights.' These restrictions include but not limited to: real-time facial recognition om public spaces by police, predictive policing, social scoring et al.

According to the press release by the Commission:

'The AI Act, which aims to promote innovation while ensuring high levels of health, safety, and fundamental rights protection, classifies AI systems into different risk categories, including prohibited, high-risk, and those subject to transparency obligations. The guidelines specifically address practices such as harmful manipulation, social scoring, and real-time remote biometric identification, among others.'

'The guidelines are designed to ensure the consistent, effective, and uniform application of the AI Act across the European Union. While they offer valuable insights into the Commission's interpretation of the prohibitions, they are non-binding, with authoritative interpretations reserved for the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The guidelines provide legal explanations and practical examples to help stakeholders understand and comply with the AI Act's requirements. This initiative underscores the EU's commitment to fostering a safe and ethical AI landscape.'