

ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS DES HÔPITAUX **EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR HOSPITAL PHYSICIANS** EUROPÄISCHE VEREINIGUNG DER LEITENDEN KRANKENHAUSÄRZTE **EUROPESE VERENIGING VAN STAFARTSEN** DEN EUROPÆISKE OVERLÆGEFORENING ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟΣ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΝΟΣΟΚΟΜΕΙΑΚΩΝ ΙΔΤΡΩΝ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΩΝ ASSOCIAZIONE EUROPEA DEI MEDICI OSPEDALIERI **DEN EUROPEISKE OVERLEGEFORENING** ASSOCIAÇÃO EUROPEIA DOS MÉDICOS HOSPITALARES ASOCIACIÓN EUROPEA DE MÉDICOS DE HOSPITALES **EUROPEISKA ÖVERLÄKARFÖRENINGEN** EVROPSKO ZDRŽENJE BOLNIŠNIČNIH ZDRAVINIKOV **EUROPSKA ASOCIACIA NEMOCNICNÝCH LEKAROV** EUROPSKA UDRUGA BOLNIČKIH LIJEČNIKA ЕВРОПЕЙСКА АСОЦИАЦИЯ НА СТАРШИТЕ БОЛНИЧНИ ЛЕКАРИ ASOCIATIA EUROPEANA A MEDICILOR DIN SPITALE

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EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Report "The European Union's Public Health Programme (2003-2007): an effective way to improve health?"

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In this special report the European Court of Auditors analyses the European Union's Public Health Programme (PHP) for 2003-2007, managed by the European Commission. The Court's audit asked whether the right conditions were set for health promotion actions financed from the EU budget to complement the measures taken by Member States to protect and improve public health.

The PHP was structured around three programme strands: "health information", rapid reaction to "health threats" and health promotion through addressing "health determinants". Some 352 projects were funded, the total Community contribution being approximately 232 million euro. Projects funded from the PHP were very diverse in terms of size, approach and target group.

The report details conclusions and recommendations concerning programme design, programme implementation and project management. The audit concluded that the PHP had been set very broad and ambitious objectives that contrasted sharply with the limited means at its disposal. The diversity of topics and the multiplicity of 'action areas', established in the annual work plans of the Commission, caused input to be diluted and led to fragmented results. The programme followed many different paths and lacked strategic focus.

Project effectiveness was hindered by design weaknesses and implementation problems. With few exceptions, projects did not define what results they intended to achieve. Projects generally produced the planned outputs, but the Court did not find their demonstrable take-up, i.e. the sustainability of the project results was low. The Commission did not monitor the projects systematically and ex-post evaluation had not become a common practice among project participants.

On the positive side, the programme brought stakeholders from different countries together. Projects generally had a European dimension and, in many cases, facilitated the sharing of experiences and mutual learning.

In view of its findings, the Court calls into question the utility of certain components of European public health programmes such as the PHP. The Commission and the Member States are invited to reconsider the EU's funding approach in the field of public health.

The Court recommends that any successor programme should be assigned better targeted programme objectives which are more in line with its budgetary means. The number of annual 'action areas' should be significantly reduced, and they should be focused on strategic priorities. The European Commission should also address weaknesses in project design and implementation.

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The purpose of this press release is to give a summary of the Special Report adopted by the Court of Auditors which is available on the Court's Internet site (www.eca.europa.eu) and will be published shortly in a printed format.

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