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New EU health chief seizes control of pharma policy[\[fr\]](#)[\[de\]](#)

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Healthcare lobbyists have scored a major victory in convincing European Commission President José Manuel Barroso to give responsibility for pharmaceuticals to the new health commissioner.

The shake-up comes as Barroso unveils his new team of commissioners charged with setting the agenda in Brussels for the coming five years ([EurActiv 27/11/09](#)).

The move will anger pharmaceutical industry lobbyists who have consistently resisted such a move. Medicines have been controlled by the enterprise and industry wing of the EU executive, but health NGOs have argued that medicines policy comes under the health departments in almost all member states.

The EU's pharmaceutical package, which includes directives on drug safety and providing medical information to the public, is currently making its way through the European Parliament, where it is handled by MEPs on the environment and public health committee.

The new EU health commissioner, John Dalli from Malta, will now be responsible for the European Medicines Agency, as well as being in charge of the biotechnology, pesticides and health unit, which moves from the Commission's environment section.

The news is a blow to DG Enterprise – now called 'Industry and Entrepreneurship' – which could even lose control of the European Innovation Act to the new commissioner for innovation and research, and also cedes the 'Better Regulation' unit to the Secretariat General.

'Better Regulation' is EU jargon for cutting red tape to ease the burden on businesses.

EFPIA, the voice of the research-based pharmaceutical industry in Europe, congratulated Dalli on his appointment. A spokesperson told EurActiv the industry had a productive relationship with the Commission's health directorate and hoped to build on this with the new commissioner.

"We hope that he will help maintain the existing policy balance between the pharmaceutical industry's dual roles of meeting the health needs of Europe's patients and its significant contribution to Europe's economic well-being through providing a significant positive trade balance high-quality employment and substantial investment in European-based research," he said.

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) celebrated the decision on Friday, noting that it had been advocating such a move for some time.

"We are certain that this governance change puts public interests and the health of Europeans at the centre of vital decisions affecting our health. With the responsibility for pharmaceutical and medical devices policies and for the European Medicines Agency too, the health and consumer policy commissioner is now better equipped to lead a consistent and coherent approach to public health

policy and more specifically to ensure protection of patients and safety of medicines throughout the European Union," said Monika Kosinska, EPHA secretary-general.

"This bold decision by President Barroso demonstrated the power of political leadership and enables the European Commission to fulfill its Treaty responsibility as the guardian of public health," she added.