

Health Professionals Crossing Borders

Update Briefing 1

December 2005

Introduction

Welcome to the December 2005 update to the Health Professionals Crossing Borders initiative. Following the Consensus Conference, held in Edinburgh in October, and finalised Agreement on the conference recommendations, there has been a range of developments within the project, as well as some forthcoming opportunities, that you will be interested in keeping up to date with. Below is a summary of all project activities and milestones since October and a forward look to 2006. If you have any questions regarding the project, or would like to share with others your thoughts around implementation of the Edinburgh Agreement, do get in touch.

The Agreement after Edinburgh

The Consensus Conference in Edinburgh succeeded in having a series of nine recommendations agreed after two days of discussions and debates in a number of workshop sessions. Some minor textual alterations were made immediately after the event but the final version went to print in early November. A number of competent authorities have already started using the template for the Certificate of Current Professional Status (Agreement 1), and others are now considering how they may implement this and other aspects of it domestically. Everyone who attended the conference should have received the final Agreement in hard copy format, however if you'd like an electronic version, or an extra hardcopy, do not hesitate to contact me.

The Implementation Phase

Each competent authority is now able to proceed with implementing the Agreement in their domestic setting. Indeed, several have already highlighted how they plan to use the template for the Certificate of Current Professional Status immediately. Not all aspects will be straightforward to put in place though and some authorities have acknowledged they will have to make changes to their current approach. There is however strong support for healthcare competent authorities to continue to work together, across the EU and EEA, to implement the Agreement as widely and fully as possible in the coming months.

In this light, a proposal was put to European umbrella organisations of health care regulators, who met together in late October in Brussels, to form a steering group to manage the project through the implementation phase. All those present at the meeting supported this proposal and they are: CEOM (doctors), FEPI (nurses), PGEU (pharmacists), DLC (Dentists), CEPLIS (Liberal Professions), and PCN and CPME which both represent nursing and medical professional bodies respectively. There are practical management benefits from steering a project via such an approach, as to involve each individual competent authority from every member state, in a steering role, would be unworkable.

Although not all competent authorities are represented through such organisations and where this is not the case we will ensure they are able to play a role directly. Agreement 8 of the Edinburgh Agreement does also highlight that *“In the context of exchanging good practice, competent authorities should collaborate at European level. The establishment of European associations of professional competent authorities should be investigated”*. However, it is hoped each individual competent authority will continue to be active in the implementation project both directly and via their appropriate umbrella organisation.

Implementation Objectives and Funding

As highlighted above the responsibility for implementation of the Agreement within member states will rest with the individual competent authorities, but it is hoped there will be continued benefit to all from European level collaboration. A number of objectives for the implementation phase have been drafted and will form the basis from which the steering group, referred to above, would work. These are:

1. To facilitate the joint working of European associations of Competent Authorities and Professional bodies, to respond to the implications of the European Agreement on the exchange of information on healthcare professionals.
2. To build on the consensus achieved during the UK Presidency to enable the implementation of the Agreement in all EU member states and wider EEA.
3. To encourage and support the implementation, in all member states, of the Agreement with relevant Competent Authorities.
4. To support continued communication, networking and sharing of best practice, between Competent Authorities and their European level organisations around the exchange of information on healthcare professionals.
5. To act in coordination with European Commission initiatives on information exchange in the internal market.

The timescale for this is in line with the implementation of the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications, that is due by 2007.

Much of this activity will inevitably rely on some European resource to become a reality and there are a number of potential avenues for this, including DG SANCO's Public Health programme that is due to issue a call for proposals in February 2006. In addition, DG Internal Market is planning to pilot their new information system for communication between competent authorities, during 2006, and one consideration may be that the Health Professionals Crossing Borders Project could be a suitable pilot. It is hoped we will know more on all these options in the New Year.

Recent Meetings and Presentations

Since the Edinburgh Conference every opportunity has been taken to raise awareness about the Agreement, particularly at EU level. Below are a list of groups/bodies that have received presentations, on the implementation of the project, between October and December 2005:

- November DG SANCO Sub-Group of the High Level Group on Professional Mobility
- November DG Internal Market Implementation Group for the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- December IAMRA (International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities) meeting in Paris

The Agreement was also inserted in delegates' packs at the Patient Safety Summit, held in London from 28-30 November, as part of the UK Presidency.

Some forthcoming milestones

Jan/Feb 2006 - Steering Group meeting

It is planned to hold a meeting of the Steering Group in late January/early February 2006 to consider the various funding options. I would be grateful to know of those competent authorities who do not have membership or affiliation with a European level association, and also if you are aware of other associations of competent authorities not on the list above (see page 1) by Thursday 12 January 2006.

February 2006 – Call for proposals, EU Public Health Programme

March 2006 – DG Internal Market RPQ Implementation Directive Group

A meeting of this group will consider which sectors may be used as a basis for piloting the new information system.

Keeping in touch

I plan to circulate an Update Briefing every two months to all those organisations that attended the Consensus Conference in Edinburgh. As well as updating on the progress of funding and the European level developments it will be an opportunity to share information about how different competent authorities are progressing on implementing the Edinburgh Agreement and best practice in general. Do also let me know if you have any comments or questions relating to the Agreement or the Implementation phase.

Claire Herbert

Health Professionals Crossing Borders