

Presentation given to the Greater Manchester Health & Transport Group by Monika Kosinska, Senior European Health Specialist, North West Health Brussels Office

Mechanics Institute
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Mission Statement North West Regional Health Brussels Office

'to increase the capacity of the regional health economy to lever health, economic, social and environmental benefits from European agencies and institutions.'

Monika introduced herself and explained that the North West Regional Health Brussels office had been operating for the past ten years as a lobbying and influencing organisation on issues of public health for the North West. The office is accountable to Professor John Aston, Regional Director for Public Health.

She began her presentation by giving the group a potted history of the development of the EU in order for us to better understand how to make the most of the opportunities that are available to influence emerging European policies, lobby for change and take advantage of funding and exchange opportunities. The surprise of the presentation was how little it could take to influence policy at European level as so few people or organisations from the local regions tend to respond to proposed European consultations.

There are a number of priorities for the Brussels team that are dictated by the responsibilities of the NHS as an employer, service provider, and as a corporation but it is in the field of public health that the team monitor developments in:

- Environment
- Alcohol & tobacco
- Youth/aging population
- Sport
- Social exclusion
- Mental health
- Agriculture/food safety
- Emergency Planning
- Road Safety

Transport & Public Health

Transport policy affects the environment, impacts on social exclusion and road safety measures and will become increasingly important with an aging European population. There was some group discussion as to whether the EU was tackling issues of transport and public health; some members of the audience felt these

were in fact being approached through the EU's directives on Air Quality and Environmental issues which were in essence public health based. Although transport and public transport are not a specific remit for the European Union health agenda, it is an underlying and implicit aspect of all of the key themes.

Article 152 (1) of the European Treaty states:

A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities.

As Monika emphasised, transport underpins all European policies on human health and is, therefore, implicit in all its activities. Three main areas of common interest between the North West Brussels office for public health and public transport authorities are:

- Clean transport; pollution and urban health
- Social inclusion: accessibility to health services, employment opportunities, education.
- Road safety: morbidity and healthcare costs

Monika's office produce information on European funding opportunities and give advise on applications and the development of partnerships to access funds. There are funding opportunities for a variety of projects including research and youth exchange programme.

ELTIS - European Local Transport Information Service

ELTIS is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate General for Energy and Transport, Clean Transport Unit. The project is led by an international team of transport related organisations with the aim of providing practical information and support in the transfer of knowledge and the exchange of experience in the field of urban and regional transport in Europe.

Further information on the Eltis project can be found at: www.eltis.org

European Champions Group is being re-developed by Monika and is intended to become a channel at practitioner level. The group is aiming to have a website up by the end of this year which will contain information on many of the subjects that were discussed at the presentation.

The group will look to perform two specific functions:

- Raising awareness amongst European and Northwest partners and wider networks
- Influencing and prioritising targets

In order to achieve this the group will look to:

- Organise training events to support these two priorities.
- Ensure a continuous flow of information through to a wide number of regional organisations and individuals.
- Review annually.

Working with the European Group will give the Health & Transport Group an excellent opportunity to further the cause of public transport in Greater Manchester and to take full advantage of all European opportunities.

Key messages of the meeting were:

The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and local government authorities have a strong presence in Brussels and do achieve results through lobbying.

Help is available for European projects in finding both partners and funding, giving significant opportunities to collaborate across the fields of transport and health through linking factors such as environmental measures, social exclusion and accessibility to health.