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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting on 18 and 19 June 2015 The importance of the health dimension in the European Agenda on Migration – <i>Information from the Cyprus, Greek, Italian and Maltese delegations</i> (Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Cyprus, Greek, Italian and Maltese delegations on the above-mentioned subject.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEALTH DIMENSION IN THE EUROPEAN AGENDA ON MIGRATION

Migration in Europe is not a new phenomenon and has been a political priority both at national and EU level, over the last years, particularly following the growing mixed migratory flows in the Mediterranean Countries of the EU. However, it has become more and more complex and comprises a heterogeneous group of individuals, each with potentially different health determinants, needs and levels of vulnerabilities.

The health of the migrants and health matters associated with migration are crucial public health challenges faced by the health systems of the EU Member States, and particularly of the frontline Member States.

In this context and in light of the tragic events of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and the loss of hundreds of migrants' lives, the health dimension of migration, even though it was not on the Agenda, dominated the discussions of the Ministers' of Health at their informal meeting on 20-21 April in Riga.

Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta stressed that the emergency health care of the increasing number of migrants, goes, for some Member States, beyond their capacity. They underlined that the health systems of the frontline Member States should be supported by all means and requested a fair distribution of the responsibility. Moreover, several Member States, asked the Presidency to include the health dimension of migration as a point on the Agenda of the next Council meeting of the EU Health Ministers on 19 June 2015 in Luxembourg.

The reaction to the ongoing crisis in the Mediterranean on the part of the EU, in the form of the 10-point plan and the statement of the extraordinary European Council Summit, on 23 April 2015, was rapid and represents a good start. However, the health dimension of migration was not reflected in this plan.

According to the International Organization for Migration, the main communicable diseases for which measures of control, prevention and therapy need to be undertaken are TB, STDs, HIV, hepatitis, malaria and rabies. It is also worth mentioning the migrants' major psychological trauma and thus their psychological mental health needs that need to be met. Recognizing that, public health systems are bound to be excessively burdened by such cases, they will struggle to cope with.

Moreover, the EU has in its tradition of wide support to humanitarian values and human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights, a duty to safeguard the inalienable right of migrants and refugees for access to adequate healthcare.

Therefore, the Ministers of Health of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, who are carrying the burden and are engaged in saving hundreds of lives each day in the Mediterranean Sea, taking into account the health issues arising from the exponential increase of migratory flows, addressed a joint letter to urge Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis and the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos to include the health dimension of migration into the Communication on the European Agenda on Migration, which was presented by the Commission on 13 of May 2015. The outcome of this initiative was the inclusion of the health dimension in the European Agenda on Migration, and the Commission will mobilise an additional EUR 60 million in emergency funding, including to support the reception and the capacity to provide healthcare to migrants in the Member States under particular pressure.

We consider that this is an important first step. However, following the discussions at the Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Health on 20-21 of April in Riga and the recent adoption of the Commission's European Agenda on Migration, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta propose that the health dimension of migration should be discussed again by the Ministers of Health as an AOB at the EPSCO Council of 19 June, also in view of the European Council meeting of 25-26 June 2015.