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- **Support for Juniors Spreads to Europe**
 - **Brexit Update**
 - **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) Update**
 - **Minimum Unit Alcohol Pricing Update**
 - **EU launches new European Medical Corps**
 - **Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) Update**
 - **New safety features to protect EU consumers from falsified medicines**
 - **EU Alcohol Policy Update**
 - **MEPs vote to Tackle Superbugs**
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Support for Juniors Spreads to Europe

European medical organisations – the EJD (European junior doctors permanent working group), the CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors), EMSA (European Medical Students Association) and UEMO (European Union of General Practitioners) - have backed the BMA's opposition to Government plans to impose a new contract on junior doctors.

The EJD, which represents 300,000 junior doctors across Europe, adopted a motion which "supports junior doctors in England in taking all necessary action, up to and including industrial action, in order to achieve a contract that is good for patients, fair for junior doctors and good for the NHS."

BMA junior doctors committee chair Johann Malawana welcomed the EJD's backing, saying it further strengthened the scale of opposition to the Government's plans.

The CPME statement can be read in full via the first link with an overview of the EJD position available via the second:

<http://www.cpme.eu/2nd-of-strike-for-uk-doctors-support-of-the-cpme-president/>

<http://www.bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis/news/2015/october/support-for-juniors-spreads-to-europe>

Brexit Update

Following negotiations with other European heads of government in Brussels, David Cameron has announced a package of changes to the UK's membership of the EU which will take effect immediately should the UK vote to remain in the EU in the referendum on 23 June 2016.

Recognising that this is a momentous issue whose result could have huge implications for the medical profession, we will be releasing a briefing for members to highlight the significant impact — intentional or unintended, positive and negative — of EU policy and legislation on the UK's medical profession and the health of the nation.

As the referendum falls on the Thursday of the BMA annual representative meeting in Belfast, attendees should arrange a postal vote to ensure that their voice is heard on this critical issue. Additional information about the BMA's work on this topic is available at the link below:

<http://www.bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis/news/2016/february/eu-referendum-bma-plans-briefing>

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) Update

Speaking at the conclusion of the 12th round of negotiations – which took place in Brussels on 22/26 February – the EU's Chief Negotiator responded to earlier suggestions that the agreement would not be concluded before President Obama leaves office in January 2017 by stating that "we are ready to seek to conclude our negotiations in 2016, provided that the substance is right."

The 12th round also saw the reopening of negotiations on investment protection with the EU's amended proposal, the Investment Court System, being discussed with the US side after a 2 year break.

The BMA will continue to monitor this issue and intervene where necessary to ensure that the finalised proposals do not threaten national governments' abilities to legislate in the public interest.

The statement from the EU's Chief Negotiator can be read in full at the first link with additional background available via the second:

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/february/tradoc_154325.pdf

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/>

Minimum Unit Alcohol Pricing Update

Following the January ruling by the ECJ (European Court of Justice) that the Court of Session in Edinburgh will now decide whether the Scottish legislation – passed in 2012 – can be lawfully implemented, the Inner House of the Court of Session decided that additional evidence can be presented to the court for consideration.

Industry actors, fronted by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), had opposed this step but the Court ruled that they and the Scottish government have until April 2016 to present additional evidence.

Whilst consideration of the new evidence might alter the schedule, the hearing in the Inner House is provisionally scheduled for 7 & 8 June 2016.

Commenting on this decision, SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems) – with whom the BMA has been working to secure adoption of this legislation - stated that they "remain confident that the case for minimum unit pricing will be conclusive and look forward to this much-needed policy finally being implemented."

The ECJ judgement can be read in full via the link below:

<http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2015-12/cp150155en.pdf>

EU launches new European Medical Corps

The European Medical Corps (EMC) has been launched to help mobilise medical and public health teams and equipment for emergencies inside and outside the EU. Through the European Medical Corps, EU member states and other European countries participating in the system can make medical teams and assets available for rapid deployment before an emergency strikes – thus ensuring a faster and more predictable response. The medical corps could include emergency medical teams, public health and medical coordination experts, mobile biosafety laboratories, medical evacuation planes and logistical support teams. To date, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands have already committed teams and equipment to the voluntary pool.

Further details about the initiative are available via the following link:

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-16-276_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-276_en.htm)

Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) Update

The EP's (European Parliament) plenary (full session) has adopted a report, drafted by the International Trade Committee and including BMA backed amendments, that seeks to provide additional legal safeguards for the exclusion of public healthcare services from the scope of the TiSA.

The report, which also calls on the EC (European Commission) – which is negotiating the agreement on behalf of the EU - to secure the rights of legislators to regulate in the public interest, is non-binding but acts a set of guidelines to the EC.

MEPs will be able to approve or reject the deal at the conclusion of the negotiations.

Further information about the plenary vote is accessible via the following link:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160202BKG12403/EP-asks-that-TiSA-talks-open-up-new-markets-for-EU-firms>

New safety features to protect EU consumers from falsified medicines

A delegated regulation, which will be applicable from February 2019, introduces obligatory 'safety features' for medicines in the form of a unique identifier and an anti-tampering device.

Such safety features will protect European citizens against the health threat of falsified medicines, which may contain ingredients, including active ingredients, which are of low quality or in the wrong dosage.

The safety features will guarantee medicine authenticity for the benefit of patients and businesses, and will strengthen the security of the medicine supply chain - from manufacturers to distributors to pharmacies and hospitals.

Further information about the regulation is available via the link below:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/dyna/enews/enews.cfm?al_id=1665

EU Alcohol Policy Update

As the EC continues its consideration of potential next steps, the BMA has written to the EU's Health Commissioner to reiterate our view that the development of a new EU-wide alcohol strategy is imperative. Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins, Chair of the BMA's Board of Science, urged the EC to develop its alcohol policies independently of the alcohol industry and to develop a new EU-wide strategy with clear targets and objectives that will be externally monitored and evaluated.

The BMA European Office will continue to engage with stakeholder organisations and politicians in order to convince the EC to begin its works on a new strategy which will support member states in their efforts to reduce alcohol related harm across Europe.

MEPs vote to Tackle Superbugs

The EP's Public Health Committee has voted overwhelmingly – 60 votes to 2 - to adopt a BMA backed report which seeks to fight the growing resistance of bacteria to today's antibiotics by banning collective and preventive antibiotic treatment of animals, and backing measures to stimulate research into new medicines. The report will now progress to the EP's plenary where, if approved, it will inform the EP's position with regard to the revision of the EU's Veterinary Medicinal Products legislation.

Additional information about this report can be read at the first link with a letter to the Telegraph, co-signed by Baroness Hollins, available via the second:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160216IPR14596/Superbugs-curb-use-of-today%E2%80%99s-antibiotics-and-develop-new-ones-urge-MEPs>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/12156778/Letters-International-interference-in-the-EU-debate-reeks-of-hypocrisy.html>