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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

18 MARCH – 24 MARCH 2023

B. ARŁUKOWICZ APPOINTED AS HEAD OF NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE IN EU PARLIAMENT, WITH J. KOPCIŃSKA AS DEPUTY

Bartosz Arłukowicz, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Poland's Civic Platform (PO), has been elected as the chair of the newly created Public Health Subcommittee (SANT) of the European Parliament. Joanna Kopcińska, an MEP from Law and Justice (PiS) party, has been appointed as the vice-chair of the subcommittee.

The subcommittee was established by the European Parliament on February 14 and comprises 30 members and 30 substitutes from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). The mandate of the subcommittee enables it to act in the field of public health and pharmaceuticals. After his nomination, Arłukowicz said that the creation of the subcommittee is the first step towards Europe jointly addressing the health and safety of its citizens. He also stated that his priority in the subcommittee would be to create a common EU mechanism for purchasing critical drugs and innovative medical technologies, as well as to establish a system that protects patients across the EU from drug shortages, including oncological drugs.

Kopcińska noted that her appointment as the vice-chair of the health subcommittee is both an honor and a responsibility. As a medical doctor and member of the ENVI committee, she has always regarded public health as a crucial issue. She believes that her role in the subcommittee will allow her to establish a constructive platform for dialogue on issues that contribute to the broad improvement of patient well-being while ensuring equal and fair access to treatment.

Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230320IPR77912/parliament-s-public-health-subcommittee-begins-work>

WHO SAYS NEW CHINESE DATA ON WUHAN MARKET DOESN'T PROVIDE DEFINITIVE ANSWER ON PANDEMIC'S ORIGINS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that the new data on genetic samples taken in the Wuhan market in China in 2020 doesn't provide a conclusive answer as to how the COVID-19 pandemic began. The data, which was uploaded to the international virus database GISAID by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention in January, was removed following questions from international scientists.

However, an analysis of the data by a team of international researchers found that samples containing coronavirus also contained genetic material from animals, including raccoon dogs. This has led to suggestions that raccoon dogs being sold at the market could have been carrying the virus. The WHO stated that more data is required to have a definitive answer on the pandemic's origins. The data does show molecular evidence that animals were sold at the market and some animals there were susceptible to SARS-CoV-2. The WHO called for more studies to understand the origins of the pandemic.

The WHO's difficulty in accessing data, particularly from China, has made it challenging to determine the origin of the pandemic. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called on China to be transparent in sharing data and conducting the necessary investigations to determine the origins of the pandemic. The latest findings highlight the complexities surrounding the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for more transparent data sharing and investigations.

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/who-raccoon-dog-data-china-covid-origin-wuhan-market-genetic-sample/>

NEW STUDY CALLS FOR A STRONG AND COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY TO ADDRESS THE THREAT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION.

The study, conducted by an international group of scientists and published in the journal *Annals of Global Public Health*, highlights the significant harms to human health, environment, economy, and society caused by plastics across their entire life cycle – from production, use, and disposal.

The current methods of plastic disposal are inefficient, and an estimated 22 megatons of plastic waste enters the environment each year. The reckless use of plastics also causes significant economic costs, including the health-related costs of plastic production exceeding \$250 billion globally in 2015 alone. Moreover, 90% of the plastics produced are not recycled or reused, and often end up in landfills in poorer countries.

The study also revealed the impact of plastics on human health, ranging from workers involved in plastics production suffering from higher mortality rates to children's unique patterns of exposure causing increased risks of multiple non-communicable diseases later in life. The Global Plastics Treaty would be internationally binding and would put the world on track to end plastic pollution by 2040.

Heads of State, Ministers of environment, and other representatives from UN Member States at the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, approved a resolution in 2022 to draft a Global Plastics Treaty by the end of 2024. This agreement on addressing the pollution caused by plastics would be internationally binding.

Source: <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/global-plastics-treaty-monaco-ocean-week/>

Thank you for your attention!

ul. J.P. Woronicza 3 lok. 254

02-640 Warszawa

tel./fax: +48 22 749 13 13

e-mail: visiongroup@visiongroup.pl

www.visiongroup.pl



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