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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

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WHO PREPARES FOR PANDEMIC AGREEMENT: ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS FROM COUNTRIES UNTIL APRIL 22

The member states of the World Health Organization have responded to negotiations concerning a global agreement for prevention, readiness, and response to pandemics. They will present a draft agreement to be approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2024. The proposed solutions aim to improve pandemic prevention, readiness, and response.

Discussions on the "pandemic agreement" project ended last Thursday during the 5th session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB), consisting of 194 countries affiliated with the WHO. Countries have agreed that until April 22, there will be an opportunity to submit additional written proposals that will be compiled with all other proposals submitted in recent weeks. The INB Presidium will then present a final text that includes all received comments for review by the editing group by May 22. The INB editorial group will meet in June to continue negotiations.

According to the process agreed upon at the special session of the World Health Assembly at the end of 2021, negotiations on the pandemic agreement project will aim to develop a final draft for consideration by the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024. In addition to negotiations on the pandemic agreement, governments are discussing over 300 amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 to strengthen these regulations and make the world safer for infectious diseases while ensuring greater equality in global response to public health crises.

Source: <https://www.who.int/news/item/07-04-2023-countries-set-out-way-forward-for-negotiations-on-global-agreement-to-protect-world-from-future-pandemic-emergencies>

RECORD EXPORT OF PHARMACEUTICALS FROM SWITZERLAND TO RUSSIA DESPITE SANCTIONS

Despite the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU, the pharmaceutical industry in Switzerland has achieved a record high in exports to Russia. In the past twelve months, Switzerland has exported goods worth CHF 2.9 billion to Russia, of which two-thirds are pharmaceutical products.

The Swiss government has also imposed sanctions on Russia, including a ban on the export of many goods, such as weapons, coal, and luxury goods. However, some things can still be exported, and their sales have become more profitable than ever. The pharmaceutical industry has been the clear beneficiary of this, exporting goods worth CHF 2 billion to Russia in the past year, up from CHF 1.4 billion before the war.

Experts explain that one of the reasons for the sharp increase in pharmaceutical exports is the tendency of Russians to purchase more expensive drugs. The ongoing war in Ukraine has led to Russians stocking up on pharmaceutical supplies, fearing a complete cut-off from Western markets. However, this has not happened yet, and even non-Swiss pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer and Eli Lilly continue to sell drugs in Russia.

Although most industries have had to withdraw completely from exports, confectionery producer Lindt & Spruengli and food chain Coop Transgourmet are among those who have had to do so, but pharmaceuticals remain a vital commodity for Russia.

Source: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/swiss-pharma-exports-to-russia-soar-despite-sanctions/>

SMOKING IN EUROPE: WHICH COUNTRIES ARE THE MOST AND LEAST ADDICTED TO TOBACCO AND VAPING?

A recent report by Eurostat revealed that 19.7% of the EU population smokes daily, with Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, and Latvia having the highest percentages. Meanwhile, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Norway, and Luxembourg have the fewest smokers.

Men are more likely than women to smoke, with the highest percentages among men in Bulgaria, Latvia, and Romania and among women in Germany, Croatia, and Bulgaria. However, in some countries, the difference between genders is narrower or even reversed. Furthermore, the majority of daily smokers in the EU have been smoking for at least 10 years, and around 50% of smokers die prematurely, on average 14 years earlier.

As for vaping, the nations with the highest percentages of vapers among EU member states are France, Poland, and the Netherlands, while the lowest percentages are in Spain and Turkey. Although electronic cigarettes are often promoted as safer than regular burning cigarettes, a recent study by the BMJ medical journal indicates that it is not possible to determine whether they are less harmful to the respiratory system than regular cigarettes.

The report concludes that tobacco consumption is the “single largest avoidable health risk and the most significant cause of premature death in the EU,” with tobacco smoking being the major preventable cause of cancer. Despite progress made in recent years, the number of smokers in the EU remains high, and Eurostat is expected to publish its next report on cigarette consumption in 2027.

Source: <https://www.euronews.com/next/2023/04/11/smoking-in-europe-which-countries-are-the-most-and-least-addicted-to-tobacco-and-vaping>

Thank you for your attention!

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