

EU Global Health Communication

The Global Health Communication that came out on April 1st contains some good language on Innovation & Access. However it also contains an worrying reference to IMPACT in the policy coherence, trade and access to medicines section. It is interesting this reference has found its way into this section of the EU Global Health Communication just now that IMPACT is under heavy fire at the WHO, and it is not clear whether it will be able to go on in its current form. The EU is one of the main proponents of IMPACT which is considered as one of the prongs in the multi pronged global IP enforcement agenda, that forms a threat to generic competition and the use of TRIPS flexibilities to protect public health.

‘Moreover, the incentive structure for the development of new medicines and medical technologies is less effective when patients are either too few or too poor. It is therefore essential that research priorities are geared to making the biggest impact on public health. Access and innovation need to be addressed simultaneously, as highlighted in the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property.¹⁶’

‘On trade, the EU should work to ensure more effective use of TRIPS²¹ provisions to increase the affordability and access to essential medicines. The EU should support the priority actions identified in the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property. This should address the challenges expected after 2016 when the TRIPS framework enters into force in least developed countries. The EU should continue to ensure that EU bilateral trade agreements avoid clauses which may undermine access to medicines. Generic competition²² and rational use of medicines are of major importance to ensure the sustainability of healthcare systems²³. The EU should also work at global and regional level to eliminate trade in falsified medicines e.g. through the International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Taskforce. The EU should also address further the problem of illicit drugs and its effects on health and consider the crucial role of demand reduction. The EU should also continue advocating for a better global governance of health-relevant environmental agreements.’

Sophie Bloemen