SLS *Reporter*

Health Systems and EU Law and Policy: the state of the art and direction of travel Brussels, January 2016, co-sponsored by NIHDI, the European Social Observatory, the Health Law and Policy Research Group, University of Sheffield, the University Association for Contemporary European Studies and the Society of Legal Scholars.

Over 130 people from 16 countries in the EU and beyond gathered at the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI) in Brussels on 28 and 29 January 2016, to discuss *Health Systems and EU Law and Policy: the state of the art and direction of travel*.

An open conference with six keynote speakers, and policy responses from fifteen panellists (http://www.ose.be/hcconference2016/index.htm) concentrated on *Health systems and the mobility of patients and professionals in the EU*; *Fiscal sustainability of health systems and EU governance*; and *EU health law and policy in global contexts*. The panel respondents included policy makers from several DGs in the European Commission; national health ministries; and professional and civil society networks and coalitions. Both the in-person Q&A and the Twitterfeed #HCEU16 made for a lively discussion.

The following day, a smaller group met to discuss a forthcoming publication, which will disseminate the project, in the form of a *Research Handbook in European Union Health Law and Policy*, to be published by Edward Elgar in early 2017. Each contributor shared a draft chapter, and acted as discussant on another, related chapter.

The purpose of the project is to take stock and to look forward, as the effects of EU law and policy on health systems, health care, and public health are better understood. The Patients' Rights Directive, for instance, is supposed to have been implemented by all Member States, but emerging data from ongoing research prompted interesting discussions about national compliance. Reforms of EU law on professional mobility have implications for health care professionals and systemic capacity planning. Assumptions about east-to-west and south-to-north professional 'brain drain' are challenged by data showing that migration patterns are much more complex, and variable according to profession. Health is understood in EU law and policy as a 'productive factor' – investment in the health of a population is investment in development and growth. Sobering, then, to see details on the effects of the EU and IMF's economic governance, on health and health systems, particularly in the MoU states. Hopeful, in that the EU could assist Member States to develop efficient aspects of their health care systems.

The project also looks outward, beyond the EU, to consider effects of the EU's health law and policy on the rest of the world. Concerns about the new international trade agreements, such as CETA and TTIP, as well as the missed opportunities for the EU to become a leader and rule-maker in global health, raise important questions for future research.

Tamara Hervey, Jean Monnet Professor of EU Law, Health Law and Policy Research Group, University of Sheffield