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World Blood Donor Day: access to safe and high quality blood, a priority for Council of Europe's healthcare policy

Strasbourg, 06.06.2013 – On 14 June each year, countries around the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day. This annual celebration, initiated 10 years ago by the World Health Organisation (WHO), aims to raise awareness about the need for safe blood for transfusion and to highlight the importance of blood donation as a life-saving gift. This year will mark the 10th Anniversary of the Day. "Give the gift of life: donate blood" is the slogan for this year's campaign.

Blood is the most precious gift that anyone can give. According to the WHO, about 92 million blood donations are collected every year. Globally, 31% of donors are under 24 and about 30% are female (*), suggesting that there is greater scope for improved age and gender balance in donations. In many countries, there is still an insufficient supply of safe blood to help those in need, which poses a problem for national blood establishments to ensure that safe blood of high quality is available.

One of the challenges for the Council of Europe is to ensure access to safe and high quality blood products and, since the 1950s, nearly 50 recommendations have been elaborated and adopted by its 47 member states. Therefore, the Council of Europe is joining the founding international organisations of World Blood Donor Day to call for a mobilisation to donate blood and to thank the millions of donors worldwide.

Programme of events:

This year, the WHO has asked France to host the global celebrations. The [Établissement Français du Sang \(EFS\)](#), the national blood service of France, will organise events and street activities at Gare Montparnasse, Paris, on 13-15 June. Members of the public are invited to visit the different information stands and join in the festivities. The EFS are also encouraging people to visit their local blood donation centre on the day to learn how to become a regular blood donor. Visit the [EFS website](#) to find out how to get involved.

Opening Ceremony:

The opening ceremony will take place on 14 June at 10.00 a.m. at UNESCO House (7, Place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris) in the presence of the French Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Marisol Touraine. Keynote speeches will be given by the different participating international organisations, including the Council of Europe's Director General for Democracy, Snežana Samardžić-Marković.

International Symposium:

An international symposium will begin at 2.15 p.m. at UNESCO House with speakers and guests from Asia, Africa, Europe and South America. The meeting will focus on ethical issues and self-sufficiency of blood products. This will be followed by a round-table discussion on the social and ethical aspects of blood donation. Members of the public and press are welcome to attend the meeting.

Further information is available on the internet site www.edam.eu

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(*) [WHO Blood safety and availability Fact sheet N°279 June 2012](#)

Note for the Editor:

The EDQM is a leading organisation that protects public health by enabling development, supporting implementation, and monitoring the application of quality standards for safe medicines and their safe use. Our standards are recognised as a scientific benchmark world-wide. The European Pharmacopoeia is legally-binding in European Member States. Similarly, the EDQM develops guidance and standards in the areas of [blood transfusion](#), organ transplantation and consumer health issues.

There are now thirty-eight members of the [European Pharmacopoeia](#) Commission: *Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the European Union*. There are twenty-four observers: *the World Health Organization (WHO); 5 member states of the Council of Europe - Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation; and 18 other countries in the world - Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Israel, Madagascar, Malaysia, Morocco, Republic of Belarus, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Singapore, Senegal, Syria, Tunisia, United States of America*.