

Summary:

THE NEW EU HEALTH STRATEGY: MOVING FORWARD

THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND DEBATE

Organised by the European Commission, DG Health and Consumer Protection

Bernhard Merkel, Executive Administrator, DG Public Health, presented the project for the new EU Health Strategy of the European Commission, which consists of a wide-ranged programme, that should replace the eight Health Programmes this or either next year. The central points are :

- Improvement of Health Information, which should comprise the latest trends in Health;
- Another branch will concentrate on the great health risks;
- Concerning prevention, central factors like lifestyle, smoking, alcohol, nutrition and drug addiction will be dealt with.

Eduard Rius I Pey, Minister for Health and Social Security of the Catalan Regional Government presented his model of a health system, which is quite different to those of other Spanish regions. The effective model reacts on circumstances like superannuation, communicable diseases and technical progress. There is a separation of payment and care, a mixture of public and private care and the impact of non-governmental organisations play a crucial role.

John Bowis, Member of the European Parliament, criticised, that the EU spends one billion Euro on tobacco growing subsidies annually, while the health sector is supposed to solve the problems of health care within six years and therefore receives 300 million Euro. New health strategies need the collaboration of all the other branches to be effective.

Jaanus Pikani from the University clinics in Tartu, Estonia, presented a study, in which Members of Parliament and Health Professionals from candidate countries were asked on their opinions of the new health strategies and the other health programmes of the EU. The result was that the reference groups considered the activities of the EU as innovative, realistic, comprising and sound. The flexibility of the strategy was appreciated, still there are weaknesses in administration and the exchange of information to be detected. The difficult financial situation of many countries and the political obligations "force" more money on defence than on health.

The topic of Integration of Health in other political activities Michael Hübel (DG Health and Consumer Protection) presented the possibility of applying the criteria of Environment Impact Assessment on health issues, in Wales quite positive experiences were made with such a Health Impact Assessment project, health and wellness definitely improved.

In the final discussion, the members agreed on a few principles, that should determine the new health strategies:

- Attention on the equity of genders, the partaking of all ministries and the role of the candidates;
- Networking with NGO's;
- Fight against smoking and alcohol abuse, and a regulation for labelling of food products;

- Inequities of Health Care in and between the member states should be decreased;
- Claim for equal accessibility and high quality of Health Care.

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(für den Text Inès Häufler)