



Press release: 13th European Health Forum Gastein, 6 – 9 October 2010

EU Commissioner Dalli at the European Health Forum Gastein: Tougher stance on tobacco – Innovation partnership on active and healthy ageing

EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, presented some of his key health priorities today at the 13th European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG). Among the important topics on his agenda: prevention, in particular in the field of tobacco control; an appropriate framework for cross-border healthcare; and innovation in the field of active and healthy ageing.

Bad Hofgastein, October 8, 2010 – Some of his key health priorities were presented today by EU-Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy John Dalli at the European Health Forum Gastein.

The EHFG is the most important conference on health care policy in the EU. This year it attracted 580 decision-makers from 58 countries for discussions on the latest developments in health care policy.

In view of the huge challenges for the European health systems such as ageing, health inequalities and the rising prevalence of obesity, particular importance has to be attributed to prevention, the Commissioner emphasised: “Prevention is an investment for the future. We therefore must go beyond the current level of spending in this field.”

A tougher stance is needed on smoking as a major health threat, Commissioner Dalli said. Every year 650.000 Europeans die because of tobacco consumption. “On the basis of the current public consultation just launched, I am planning to propose a revision of the Tobacco Products Directive in early 2012.”

Another key issue, according to Commissioner Dalli, is the “Cross-border Healthcare Directive” to be adopted in the coming months. It is to set clear rules for all European citizens who decide to seek healthcare in a member state other than their country of residence.

“I have put innovation at the heart of my policy,” Commissioner Dalli told EHFG participants. Just recently, the European Commission has presented its ideas on how to turn the EU into an “Innovation Union” by 2020. The very first action in this framework, according to Commissioner Dalli, will be an “Innovation Partnership on Healthy and Active Ageing” – a topic broadly discussed at this year’s EHFG. This new partnership has an ambitious goal, said Commissioner Dalli: “We want to increase by two years the number of years that Europeans can live an active and healthy life.” The new initiative will bring together governments, civil society, industry and the European Commission to deliver concrete innovative solutions to meet the needs of patients.

“Health sustainability is not about cost cutting, it’s about efficiency”, the Commissioner noted, referring to the debate on healthcare financing at the EHFG. “I expect E-health to largely contribute to this aim.”

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