

PRESS POINT - HEALTH IN ALL POLITICS

Wednesday 4 October 2017

Today's EHFG press point addressed "Health in All Politics" – this year's theme. The press point highlighted that this year marks the special 20th anniversary edition of the EHFG, offering plenty of opportunities to look back on what has been achieved, as well as to ponder on any lack of progress in the field of health and ways forward. Under the Forum's main theme, 'Health in all Politics', a wide range of topics were covered, including: Alcohol, AMR, data, infectious diseases and mHealth.

Martin Seychell - Deputy Director General, DG SANTE, European Commission

"Health needs to contribute to a broader vision that helps tackle some of the big challenges of the moment. Among these are making health systems sustainable and deploying technologies for the benefit of patient-centred care. We have been looking for ways to move away from hospital-based care and to enhance patient engagement."

"Technology has now reached the stage that allows us to make this happen. However, there are many disparities among EU Member States and this is a challenge. Another challenge is the fact that data is less mobile than people and it remains difficult for people to access their health records in other countries. The Commission is enabling Member States by putting in place the right technical and legal structures to facilitate interoperability. However, we need to keep in mind that technology is simply a means to achieve an overarching health care vision."

"Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and infectious diseases are big issues that require our focus. AMR is a global issue and Europe should, by implementing best practice, be showing its leading role. With regards to infectious diseases, we need to revamp our approach to vaccination and we need to improve vaccines. We have been focusing too much on non-infectious diseases and now we see ourselves confronted with the outbreak of diseases we thought we had eliminated a long time ago."

Ain Aaviksoo Secretary General for E-services & Innovation, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia & Vice-Chair, ICPeMed

"Politics is about action and about making choices. If we want health to be a part of these choices, we need to make it political. We have the right tools and the right frameworks, but policies alone won't suffice. We need political will and health ministers have a role to play in this regard. Even though health is a competence of the Member States, they understand that they can do so much more together. I congratulate EHFG for having the foresight to host this year's event focusing on the politics as well as policies."

Alcohol is bad for health, which is why it is taxed. Following heated but promising discussion, it has chosen to be one of the priorities of the Estonian Presidency of the EU.

Another area of focus for the Presidency and where political will is needed is to ensure digital technologies empower people. This way they can give feedback about treatment and care received and data can be used to better understand behavioural patterns. mHealth in particular can play a key role as more and more people carry around their mobile phones at all times."

Clemens Martin Auer, President of the European Health Forum Gastein

“The EHFG’s unique selling proposition has always been that it serves as a key platform to get together stakeholders from all sectors: academia, civil society, the public sector and business. And its relevance today is to continue this tradition. One has to be aware that for many health related issues it is not only health ministers that are in charge.

What I would like to see going forward is to start transforming ideas into implementation – focus on the “how”. Health in All Politics, which means getting the relevant people at the right table across portfolios, is a fundamental prerequisite to do this, and to break through silos. We cannot offer a space for innovation if we don’t bring the right people together.

There is no creativity without confrontation and for this we need a civilised and balanced debate.”

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact:

European Health Forum Gastein 2017 – Press office

E: press@ehfg.org