

Tonio Borg

Member of the European Commission, responsible for Health and Consumer Policy

**Commissioner Borg delivers speech
"Fostering financial sustainability of
healthcare systems"**

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Tonio Borg, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, attends a COCIR Workshop in partnership with HOPE

Brussels, Belgium, 18 March 2013

**WORKSHOP ON "FOSTERING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF
HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS"**

**MONDAY 18 MARCH 2013, 14H00
HOTEL RENAISSANCE, RUE DU PARNASSE 19, 1050, BRUSSELS**

SPEECH

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me thank COCIR and HOPE for jointly organising today's workshop on fostering financial sustainability of healthcare systems.

It is one of my top priorities to support Member States in their efforts to ensure that patients throughout the entire Union have equal access to high-quality healthcare.

In the current economic and fiscal context, there is but one solution: healthcare has to become more sustainable, if we want to abide by our vision of equal access.

Spending needs to be targeted and more efficient. We need to do more with less.

This is the principle at the heart of the Commission's paper, "Investing in Health" that we presented on 20th February. It presents some compelling examples, how we

can spend more efficiently and get the most out of investing in people's health and health coverage. Allow me to mention just three:

First, in 2005 Poland established the Agency for Health Technology Assessment. It prepares recommendations on financing all healthcare services from public funds, notably on the reimbursement of pharmaceuticals, but also on other technologies such as medical devices and surgical procedures. This allows for a more holistic approach to the use of limited public health budgets, taking the cost-effectiveness of different treatments into account.

Second, in Sweden 42 % of all prescriptions are electronically transferred from the doctor to the pharmacy. This increases the security and quality of prescriptions and reduced medication errors by 15%. It also enables healthcare providers to save a lot of time. Patients benefit from a dedicated drug information hotline which improves their knowledge and safety and their flexibility to obtain their drugs in any pharmacy. The evaluation shows that this electronic service generated an estimated annual net economic benefit of over €95m in the eight years of its implementation.

Third, a striking example of how prevention can increase labour market participation is the avoidable negative effects of diabetes type 2, which currently affects 7 % of Europeans. A French longitudinal study found that diabetes type 2 patients lost an estimated mean time of 1.1 year in the workforce between the ages of 35 and 60.

These are just a few examples, but I think we should be inspired by them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The economic dimension of healthcare has never been considered as closely as it is now: The efficiency of public spending and cost effectiveness are included in many policies at any government level. Allow me just to briefly refer to a few key policies that all are relevant in this context and provide opportunities to draw on the results of the report of the joint work of COCIR and HOPE:

Let me start with eHealth, which is perhaps the most concrete area. It has a crucial role to play in delivering better integrated healthcare models and is the subject of various initiatives by the Commission. The COCIR eHealth toolkit is right to promote eHealth as a long-term investment, bringing sustainable benefits over time.

It also plays a crucial role within the **European Innovation Partnership** on active and healthy ageing. This Partnership is developing interesting examples of actions based on principles of cost-effective disease prevention and health promotion.

The reorganisation of healthcare is also amongst the issues being discussed at EU level in the Council Reflection Process "*Towards Modern, responsive and sustainable health systems*."

This process aims to identify effective ways of investing in health, so as to achieve modern, responsive and sustainable health systems. The work will result in concrete tools that the Commission will use to support specific actions.

One of the goals of this reflection process is to highlight the role that health systems have to play in achieving the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Commission is promoting health as a key economic contributor and an important driver for social welfare.

Five specific subgroups are developing the key determinants for the long-term sustainability of health systems. They provide a forum for EU countries to exchange expertise and good practice, and to develop the

tools needed to get the most from the new Structural Funds.

This ties in with discussions under the European Semester. The Annual Growth Survey for 2013 highlights the need to assess how health systems perform against the dual aim of securing a more efficient use of public resources and better access to high quality healthcare. It also recognises the potential of the health sector to boost economic growth.

In parallel, preparations for the new Structural Fund programmes for 2014-2020 are on-going. They too will have an important role to play. EU countries must decide how to use their share of the Structural Funds. The Commission encourages Member States to seize this opportunity to implement reforms needed to maintain quality of care, coupled with efficient and sustainable health systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, allow me to stress the crucial role of innovation. We need innovative ways how to deliver better healthcare, to more people, in a more efficient manner. And we need to make smart and long-term

investments in health with a much greater focus on promoting good health.

European healthcare is of high quality. And so is European healthcare industry. Europe has a keen interest to maintain the vibrant, innovative companies which deliver better healthcare at better cost-efficiency, in particular as the challenges we are facing in Europe are equally felt in other regions of the world. I am therefore personally committed to contribute to an appropriate regulatory and economic framework which stimulates healthcare innovation in Europe, while of course safety must never be compromised.

With today's report on "*Fostering Financial Sustainability of Healthcare Systems in Europe*", COCIR and HOPE are making an important contribution to the debate. I am very grateful for the ideas and suggestions expressed therein.

I wish you a very lively and constructive workshop! And I apologize that due to the European Consumer Summit that takes place today, I will have to leave you now.

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