Response of the European Hematology Association (EHA) to 'Stakeholder consultation on the European area of skills and qualifications' of the European Commission, DG Education and Culture

The European Hematology Association (EHA) welcomes the Commission’s intention to develop a ‘European area of skill and qualifications’. We cannot comment on the general issues but can elaborate on some of the specificities that the training and education of medical specialists in Europe, such as hematologists, concern. We believe that the issues stated here should be taken into account while considering any policy that may affect the training, education, and mobility of healthcare professionals, such as hematologists.

First and foremost, patient safety should be the sine qua non of considerations where policies that affect skills and qualifications of medical specialists are concerned. Wherever a generic approach would (risk to) fail to ensure patient safety exceptions for healthcare professionals must apply.

We believe that it is of the utmost importance that medical specialty training and continuing medical education in hematology in Europe is improved and harmonized so as to raise the quality of education and to increase professional mobility. We believe that the mutual recognition of hematologists in Europe must be governed by the notion that hematology is a comprehensive medical specialty that includes, as described in the European Curriculum for Hematology (http://www.ehaweb.org/assets/documents/CV-PASSPORT-2012.pdf), benign clinical hematology, myeloid and lymphoid malignancies, plasma cell disorders, stem cell transplantation and special therapy, laboratory diagnosis, thrombosis/hemostasis, transfusion medicine, as well as general skills, such as communication, ethics, pharmacovigilance. Given the scope of the discipline, mutual recognition of hematology training must be granted only when subject to a training that is up to the minimum recommendations formulated in the European Curriculum for Hematology or, in the absence of competence based recognition, a minimum duration of training of at least five years (or three when previous training include two years of internal medicine).

EHA is involved in the accreditation of continuing medical education. It is our understanding that the demands on physicians with respect to their ‘education permanente’ vary widely within the European Union. In some Member States such demands are not (properly) enforced or may even be entirely absent. EHA believes that with the ever increasing rate of scientific developments and the public call to accountability, continuing medical education (that is independent from commercial interest) must be mandatory (i.e. included in the criteria for re-licensing) in all Member States and must be properly enforced.

Again, EHA welcomes a ‘European area of skill and qualifications’ and sees the development of such an integrated approach to the Single Market and the Health Workforce challenges as opportunities to harmonize and raise the quality of education and training of hematologists throughout Europe. In collaboration with several stakeholders, such as national societies of hematology, we have already made strides in that direction. Therefore, we believe, lastly, that it would be wasteful to not utilize the expertise attained through these efforts and that it is of the utmost importance that the Commission actively involves medical professional organizations in the policy process and development.
For further information, or questions, contact

Thom Duyvené de Wit
European Affairs

European Hematology Association
www.ehaweb.org

EHA Executive Office
Koninginnegracht 12b | 2514 AA The Hague | The Netherlands
Cell: +31 6 53926740
Tel: +31 70 3020099
th.duyvenedewit@ehaweb.org