

Tonio Borg

Member of the European Commission, responsible for Health

Commissioner Borg delivers speech on Patient Empowerment

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

Tonio Borg, European Commissioner for Health, attends the launch of the European Patients' Forum Campaign for the 2014 EU Elections: Patients + Participation = Our Vote for a Healthier Europe

Brussels, Belgium, 01 October 2013

**OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN PATIENTS' FORUM (EPF) CAMPAIGN
FOR THE 2014 ELECTIONS AND OF THE PATIENTS' MANIFESTO "*PATIENTS
+ PARTICIPATION = OUR VOTE FOR A HEALTHIER EUROPE*"**

**TUESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2013, 18:00HRS
EUROPEAN PATIENTS' FORUM PREMISES
BRUSSELS**

SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to the launch of your manifesto "Patients' Participation equals our vote for a Healthier Europe".

I congratulate you and welcome your initiative.

I fully agree with you, that patients' views matter; and that empowered patients are an asset for the economy.

Indeed patient empowerment contributes to the success of a healthcare system: by putting patients in the driving seat we enable them to participate in improving their own health.

But what exactly do we mean by patient empowerment?

Even though we have no common definition today, there are three key words that apply to it: responsibility, information and participation.

As you highlight in your manifesto – patients are the experts in being patients.

By taking responsibility of one's own health we can make the most of this expertise.

Earlier today, I discussed health literacy with some of you. Health information targeted at the general public is important. But just as important is the information that goes directly to each and every patient. For example, a person with diabetes will need to know:

- how to live life to the fullest with diabetes?
- how to keep track of insulin levels? How to ensure an optimal diet?
- how to recognize the early signs of secondary diseases?

All this requires sufficient information which can be provided by the family doctor or a specialized nurse.

Then there is participation.

For patients to participate more in their treatment, the doctor must be able to trust that patients can manage their disease in the proper way.

And the patients need confidence that they are able to manage their health and treatment.

However, there is still no consensus among Member States on the advantages of, and barriers to, patient empowerment.

This is why the European Commission is currently mapping patient empowerment initiatives in Europe. I hope to see the results before summer next year; so that we can have an informed discussion at EU level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have spoken about empowering patients on an individual level; let me say a few words now about patient empowerment in policy making.

You are the voice of patients.

Your opinions are of great importance and value.

We need patients' experience and input to shape health policy and to organise healthcare systems.

It is very important that you continue to be actively involved in shaping EU health policy along with your fellow patient organisations.

Let me take the Joint Action on patient safety as an example. Patient involvement is an area which runs through the core of this joint action. Here again, patients are well placed to advise how to improve safety, and I pleased to learn about your active role in this work.

Another example is the forthcoming joint action on chronic diseases where you will have an active role.

A last point I want to raise today is the role of patients and patient organisations in helping to implement EU legislation that seeks to improve the situation of patients.

For example, the proposed 'Clinical trials Regulation' foresees patient involvement in the assessment of clinical trials applications, and better transparency in the conduct of clinical trials and their results. I am confident that an agreement will be reached quickly on this important proposal.

Another example, the Directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, enshrines patients' rights to choose treatment in another Member State and be reimbursed for it.

Every country must now set up a National Contact Point where patients can get information on access to and reimbursement for healthcare in another EU country and the applicable quality and safety standards in place.

The Directive provides an opportunity to increase the important advocacy work done by patient organisations.

I would encourage you to share with the European Commission your experiences – good or bad - of how these new rules work in practice "on the ground".

This is vital to enable us to understand to which extent the Directive is delivering results for European patients.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today. I look forward to continuing working with you and wish you all the best with the campaign around your manifesto.