

Tonio Borg

Member of the European Commission, responsible for Health

**Commissioner Borg delivers the
closing speech at the EU Summit on
Chronic Diseases**

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

Tonio Borg, European Commissioner for Health, attends the EU Summit on Chronic Diseases

Brussels, Belgium, 04 April 2014

4 APRIL 2014, 16:45HRS

CLOSING SPEECH
OF THE WHOLE SUMMIT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking you once again for your attendance and active participation here today.

I cannot overstate the importance of bringing together and involving all stakeholders as we seek to shape innovative ways to address the chronic diseases burden.

Today, we have discussed the main needs, solutions, and EU added value in containing the burden of chronic diseases.

It is clear that we need well-coordinated action across policy areas and society to stop the burden of chronic disease from expanding further in Europe; and to develop sustainable health and social systems fit to deal with the challenge.

I believe we need to focus on a number of issues:

First, strong political leadership. The presence and commitment of Health Ministers at this summit is a very promising indication in this sense.

Second, a stronger role and involvement of citizens, patients and the health and social sector in shaping and implementing health policy. We need to work across society, based on a common commitment of all partners.

And third, we have to strengthen the evidence base of our action.

The first plenary session today provided insight into the future needs and challenges that societies and health systems must address to become more resilient to chronic diseases.

It identified priorities to improve the performance of health and social systems, and to ensure high quality care throughout Europe.

These priorities include public health policies and measures that should focus initially on the most significant chronic diseases.

The European Union clearly has a part to play in coordinating EU action in a determined manner in order to seek results on the ground aimed at improving the health status of EU citizens and strengthening the response of societies whilst simultaneously promoting economic growth.

Citizen and patient empowerment must be encouraged and promoted, to help build resilient societies where citizens play an active role in maximising their own health potential.

Demographic change is an additional challenge in this respect.

This is why we must also focus on incentives that encourage more flexible, smart and innovative health and social systems. We need to invest more in generating innovative responses to Europe's changing demographics and societies.

Moving on, the second plenary session today examined these issues in greater depth and looked at the role the EU can play, including possible solutions and strategies to contain the chronic disease burden.

More specifically, it analysed the needs in terms of policy, budgets and health and social system organisation to improve prevention.

It is clear from these discussions that EU action should not focus exclusively on shaping new legislation, policies and practice. This is important, but it is not enough.

We also need to critically review the instruments in place to determine what works and what is cost effective.

This will create more space for effective policies to flourish, and encourage new initiatives to be developed.

And finally, we need to pay attention to reducing health inequalities in the European Union. I was impressed by the discussions in the 'Fairness in health' conference two weeks ago on equity in preventing and managing chronic diseases. These conclusions will also feed into our work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reducing the burden of chronic disease is a Commission priority and our discussions here – at this first EU summit dedicated to chronic disease – have highlighted the very complex task ahead of us.

I support the call for new approaches to investing in health, moving beyond cutting expenditure, to addressing demand for health and social services, much of which is linked to chronic diseases.

I support the call to concentrate on improving health outcomes and the health status of our populations.

We need a broad coalition across sectors to address the challenges of chronic diseases. The European Union is ready and willing to build this coalition, and support the implementation of change.

The Commission will analyse and discuss the conclusions and findings of today's event very carefully.

The broad interest in this Summit is proof in itself that there is a very real and legitimate expectation for a coordinated response.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that earlier today the Commission adopted a Communication setting out an EU agenda for making Europe's health systems fit to face current challenges and pressures.

We are presenting robust evidence-based principles and tools that can support Member States in developing accessible, resilient and effective health systems that not only add more years to life, but add more life to our years.

I wish all of you a safe journey home and invite you to continue in this spirit of constructive and positive exchange.

Thank you.