

**John Dalli**

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

## **Commissioner Dalli delivers speech at the European Health Forum**

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

John DALLI, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, addresses the closing plenary session of the European Health Forum

**Gastein, Austria, 07 October 2011**

COMMISSIONER DALLI'S KEYNOTE SPEECH  
CLOSING PLENARY SESSION  
"HEALTH BY DESIGN – THE ROAD TO WELLBEING"  
FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER 2011 13:00-15:30HRS

SPEECH

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be back here in Gastein one year later.

In these times of deep economic turmoil, the road to well being may not be the first issue on political agendas across Europe. The situation is clear:

- Public health budgets are squeezed under growing pressure;
- Shortages of healthcare professionals are growing, just when demand for healthcare is increasing;
- At the same time, patients, quite rightly, expect health systems to provide the best possible care.

How do we design and build a smart and sustainable healthcare system for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren?

How can health systems in Europe provide more high quality healthcare, with less resources?

Squaring this circle is not easy. Europe needs innovation!

First and foremost we must innovate our mindset. We must have WELLNESS as the overarching objective of our policies. We must keep people well. We must keep our people OUT of Hospital Beds. Therefore, we must push more and more resources, and more and more political gumption towards prevention. We must also re-orientate and reorganise our care sector towards primary care and community care.

Secondly, we must ensure that innovation is at the service of the patients. This is why we are giving so much importance to Health Technology Assessment which should sift through technology in a fast, efficient and coordinated way to ensure that new processes, new devices, new medicines have an added value that would benefit patients and that would support sustainability.

E-Health in particular, has the potential to deliver better and safer healthcare, to more people, in a more efficient and sustainable manner. Well planned, interoperable, accessible e-health solutions will not only provide new tools for prevention and care, but will also ensure the optimal use of resources, including human resources. E-Health is the infrastructure on which safer personalised care can be developed. E-Health bridges distances and can put patients and Specialists in contact breaking physical barriers.

In recent months, I have seen for myself remarkable strides in health innovation all over Europe.

I have seen how tele-monitoring, for example, can help reduce hospital admissions and thus free up resources. At the same time, patients continued to live in their environment, increasing their comfort and keeping control over their own health and therefore enhancing their quality of life.

I believe we have the responsibility to seize the window of opportunity that innovation in Health is opening up; to simultaneously improve healthcare to patients; and increase sustainability ensuring the future continuous delivery of healthcare.

This is about health. Technology is the tool. It is about people and their welfare

The key challenge is to ensure the interoperability between health systems in Europe; so that technological innovation can deliver high quality healthcare and efficiency gains.

Since I came to Gastein last year, I have invested much time and effort in gathering support, and in developing concrete tools, to help make Health innovation a reality across the European Union.

Within the mandate set by the new directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, I am encouraging Member States to work closely together on e-Health and Health Technology Assessment; as e-Health and HTA are two examples where cooperation at EU level can help increase interoperability, while offering gains and savings.

Such co-operation will help us to learn from one another so that no Member State needs to re-invent the wheel.

Working together, we can break down the barriers to interoperability to ensure patient safety and continuity of care right across Europe.

For example, we need to coordinate the way we collect data on public health and medical research, notably through patients' registries, which remain fragmented across Europe.

Our action does not stop here.

Co-operation for health innovation needs to look beyond national governments and be all inclusive.

It is in this spirit that the European Commission has launched the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, which was discussed here in Gastein a couple of days ago.

Within this innovation partnership, we are working together with a wide range of stakeholders to "translate" and "transform" innovation into real products, devices and services to benefit older people; so that they can live a longer, more active and healthier life.

Our aim is to add two healthy life years to the average healthy life span of European citizens; while, at the same time, create more efficient and sustainable health systems and boost competitiveness in Europe.

So much about technological innovation.

Let me now turn to health systems.

To deliver more with less, we need innovation in the way we run our health systems and innovation in how we spend money on health.

Demographics and financial constraints cannot be ignored. Instead of investing more, we need to invest better.

This is mirrored in President Barroso's recent "State of the Union" address, where he called for further structural reforms and a major effort from all parts of society. Health systems are no exception.

This is why I advocate "smart investment" to reap benefits faster and to deliver more with less.

Our investment needs to be driven by payback criteria, in resources and health outcomes; and paced out accordingly.

Our operations need to be properly costed to weed out extravagance, waste and mal practices and instigate cost effective re-engineering and restructuring.

We need to develop innovative financial structures for health investments so that we achieve what I call a viable political cash flow, where pain and gain go hand-in-hand.

With this in mind, an EU-wide reflection process will be launched next week, to foster effective investments in modern, responsive and sustainable health systems.

Through the European Semester, Member States assess how they will reach the objectives of Europe 2020 - and here there are important links to health.

Health is a huge economic input, not only because of the activity it generates and jobs it create, but also because keeping people healthy and active for longer, has a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. This is why health should be right at the core of national reform plans.

To support Member States in making the right choices to reform their health systems, I intend to bring on board the most experienced and knowledgeable experts from across Europe. This is particularly pertinent for countries facing acute financial difficulties.

Of course, to invest, we need money.

This is why I am keen to ensure that EU funds provide valuable opportunities for Member States to invest in health.

In June, the European Commission set out its financial priorities for the future. We have made it clear that EU funding must contribute to a smarter, inclusive and more sustainable Europe by 2020.

It is in this spirit, that I plan to put forward a proposal for a "Health for Growth" programme later this year.

My intention is to focus the programme on offering clear EU added-value and strengthening the link between economic growth and a healthy population.

In redesigning the health programme, my aim is to help Member States in their effort to achieve four objectives:

- Promoting health and preventing diseases,
- Innovative, efficient and sustainable health systems
- More access, to better and safer healthcare, for EU citizens, and,
- Protecting citizens from cross border health threats

I very much look forward to your input and support in shaping the new programme.

The future "Health for Growth" programme, however, is a drop in the ocean.

This is why, in the past year, I have endeavoured to mainstream health concerns into other policies and Funds.

I am pleased to announce that just two days ago, the European Commission adopted a proposal for the future Cohesion Funds which enables all EU regions to use the funds to invest in Health.

All regions - even the most prosperous - can seize this opportunity to invest Cohesion Funds on e-Health, medical equipment, infrastructure, access to high-quality healthcare, healthy ageing and training of health professionals.

The European Commission has now – expressly – put the Cohesion Funds at the service of bridging health inequalities, improving access to healthcare and moving towards more integrated care systems.

I believe this is very good news.

The future Cohesion Funds also puts a strong emphasis on delivering on commitments and defining success factors for the effective use of the funds. We want to ensure that this kind of funding provides opportunities for Member States to make long-term and sustainable investments in health.

I now encourage Member States to support these proposals in Council and make full use of such opportunities, to underpin reforms in the pursuit of more sustainable and equitable health systems.

Finally, research and innovation, as we know, requires a high level of resources.

Think of e-Health. The European Union has already invested over a billion euros in research and pilot projects to develop e-Health; to treat people and also to keep them healthy, active and independent.

The future "Horizon 2020" programmes of EU funding for research and innovation provides us with an excellent opportunity to further build on our efforts in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe in innovation.

I support innovation.

I promote innovation.

Innovation of the mindset. Innovation in technology.  
Innovation in the ways we run our health systems.  
Innovation in how we spend money on health.

Gastein gives us the opportunity to shape – together – an innovative road to health and well being in Europe.

So that Europe can continue to provide its citizens with high quality healthcare for generations to come.

I look forward to this afternoon's debate

Thank you.