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ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DU THERMALISME ET DU CLIMATISME (AETC)
EUROPEAN SPAS ASSOCIATION (ESPA)
ASSOCIAZIONE EUROPEA DEL TERMALISMO E CLIMATISMO (AETC)
ASOCIACIÓN EUROPEA DE ESTACIONES TERMALES (AEDET)
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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE "EU 2020" STRATEGY Position of the European Spas Association (ESPA) on the COMMISSION WORKING DOCUMENT from 2009-11-24

The ESPA is a non-profit association (AISBL according to Belgian law). The statutes in § 1 says:

The European Spas Association's purpose is to promote spas and balneology in Europe and to take care that the natural remedies of the soil and the climate will be at the best possible disposal to the population. All this will be done free of any intention to make profit.

Also without any intention to make profit its purpose is to begin and to extend the co-operation with official and private organisations within the common scientific, legal, professional, economical, social and cultural spheres and to give them the possibility to make use of all natural resources for protection and improvement of the health of the population.

Further the Association's purpose is to make sure that the European spas and health resorts participate in European decision-making procedures. The Association strives for the integration of European spas and health resorts into existing and future European organisations.

The national spa associations of 20 European states are members in the ESPA; this means, that app. 1.200 spas and health resorts in Europe are represented. The ESPA informs them about European initiatives and developments and introduces on the other hand their ideas into the discussion. In this function the ESPA is answering to the

Working Document of the Commission - CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE "EU 2020" STRATEGY

This document shows up many aspects, which are of high relevance for the future of the European Union and the citizens. We are hinting at the EU-strategy, as it is described on page 2 of the „Working Document“:

“EU 2020 is being designed as the successor to the current Lisbon Strategy, which has been the EU's reform strategy for the last decade and has helped the EU to weather the storm of the recent crisis. EU 2020 builds on its achievements as a partnership for growth and job creation, and renewing it to meet new challenges. It also draws on the benefits that have flowed from the coordinated

response to the crisis in the European Economic Recovery Plan. The Commission considers that EU 2020 should focus on key policy areas where collaboration between EU and Member States can deliver the best results, and on improved delivery through better use of the instruments at hand.”

The spas and health resorts in Europe represent an important economic factor in the industry and especially in the health-sector in the EU. The cross-border services in the field of rehabilitation and prevention are getting more and more important. The European Court of Justice has delivered many judgements in this field and forbade many restrictions. The draft of the directive on “Cross-border health services are actually being discussed in the EU-Council of Ministers and will hopefully be in force soon.

Actually we would like to underline the economic importance of the spas and health resorts. As an example we quote the press release of the President of the German Spas Association, MP Secretary of the State, Dr. Gerd Müller from summer 2009:

„President Dr. Müller stressed the growing economic importance of more than 300 German spas and health resorts. The turnover in the last year was app. at 30 Billion € with increasing tendency. About 350.000 persons are working actually directly and indirectly in the spas and health resorts in Germany. In the future is a need of invest in infrastructure and intensification health research. „We discern our modern health resorts as competence-centres with extensive services, professionalism and orientation towards the guests, said, Dr. Müller“

The total number of jobs in health-tourism in Europe is without any doubt much higher. We guess at about 700.000. In addition we have to consider, that most of the spas and health resorts are situated in week-structured, rural regions; economically we find here an enormous potential. These facts should be underlined in programs and projects and supported in the EU. National laws about prevention and the European directive relating to prevention are the basis for the development. Prevention und rehabilitation are the key-words, that play an important part in the discussion about health politics. Spas and health resorts are also in this context the best partners in all over Europe. Considering the demographic factor offers for prevention and rehabilitation in the health systems must be available. The integration of these offers in the discussion about Europe in the future corresponds to page 3 of the “Working Document”:

“We also need to recognise the challenge presented by European demography: even prior to the crisis, the change in our demography, with a lower proportion of young people in the overall population, was expected to result in a substantially reduced potential growth by 2020. The crisis has exacerbated the long-term social challenges Europe faces today, such as the integration of an increasing immigrant population, social exclusion and child poverty, and solidarity between generations in the context of an ageing society. In order to meet these challenges, employment rates of both men and women will have to rise rapidly and social protection systems will have to be modernised so that they provide an affordable response to the future needs of our society.”

Finally there is a need for each initiative for concrete actions. In the Working Document page 9 it is described:

Making it happen: Harnessing existing instruments in a new approach

To make a successful exit from the crisis and deliver our EU 2020 objectives, the Commission considers that we need a strategy for convergence and integration which recognises more explicitly the advanced interdependence of the EU:

- Interdependence between Member States in the form of (positive or negative) spill-over effects of national actions, particularly in the Euro-zone;
- Interdependence between different levels of government (EU, Member States, regions, social partners - multi-layer governance);
- Interdependence between different policies, between policies and instruments and the importance of policy integration to deliver the overall objectives;
- Interdependence at global level – none of our Member States is large enough to keep pace with the emerging economies or to undertake this transformation alone.

The challenge of becoming a sustainable social market economy, i.e. an inclusive, smarter, greener economy, will require increased policy co-ordination, better synergies through effective subsidiarity, and strengthened partnership between the EU and Member States in the design and delivery of public policies. The integration of different policy instruments is necessary, linking institutional reforms, better regulation, new initiatives and public investment.

We agree with these guidelines.

The European Spas Association together with the national spas associations appeal to the national states and the European Union to integrate prevention and rehabilitation into the health systems; there will be not only positive effects on health of European citizens but also on the labour market and the infrastructure of especially in less developed regions.

Dr. Sigrun Lang
President