

Consultation regarding Community Action on Health Services

Eucomed contribution

Eucomed, the European medical technology industry association, welcomes the opportunity offered by the European Commission DG SANCO to contribute to shaping future community action in the field of health services.

We believe the European Union has an important role to play in ensuring that patients have equitable access to safe, high quality and efficient care within its boundaries. We support the Commission's view that enhanced cooperation between Member States as well as greater legal certainty are required to tackle the growing challenges arising from patient mobility and new developments in healthcare.

In this paper, we provide a brief overview of ten areas where EU action could, from our perspective, be useful.

1. Patient information

Patients should have access to reliable information about new medical technologies and treatments and their availability across the EU, in order to take informed decisions. The medical technology industry should be recognized as a useful source of such information.

2. Generation of data

The EU could play an important role in generating data and statistics in relation to health conditions, health determinants, treatment options, outcomes, uptake of innovation, causes of healthcare associated infections, etc.

3. Performance measurement

User-friendly tools should be developed in order to evaluate, compare and advertise the performance of health services, including outcomes and diagnostic and treatment charges.

4. Adequate financing

Levels of funding and reimbursement provided by national health systems for new medical technologies and treatments must be sufficient to guarantee equitable access across Europe. More generally, adequate resources need to be allocated to health services. Quality of care and patient safety should not be jeopardized by cost containment strategies. An EU support mechanism could be developed to help the Member States finance health services. A more efficient use of resources can be achieved through increased co-ordination and co-operation.

5. Innovation-friendly climate

Innovation in medical technology is a contributor to the improvement of the quality and the efficiency of healthcare. A dynamic entrepreneurship culture is required in the European Union to boost medical technology innovation. Partnerships should be developed to stimulate innovation uptake by the medical professions and by funding and

reimbursement systems. Please click [here](#) to view the [Eucomed 10-point plan to stimulate innovation](#).

6. Development of homecare

Increasingly, new technologies are being developed that enable patients to receive care in the comfort of their home or away from their "home" clinic or hospital. Homecare should be encouraged, not the least because it will contribute to optimizing the investment in healthcare dramatically, while improving the quality of life of the patient and preserving the patient's freedom. Special attention should be given to aftercare for patients returning home after surgery.

7. Human resources

The increasing shortages of healthcare workers, especially in some of the new Member States, are detrimental to the quality of health services. More young people must be encouraged to enter into healthcare professions, and working conditions in the healthcare sector should be improved to stop the "brain drain". Education and training opportunities offered *inter alia* by the medical technology industry should be rewarded. Staff shortages could be addressed through the development of new disciplines in healthcare provision (e.g. role of technicians); this however would require greater flexibility in the medical professions.

8. EU Charter of Patients' Rights

The adoption of a European charter of fundamental patients' rights, followed by a monitoring process to measure implementation at national level, could be a way of reducing disparities across the EU in access to and quality of care. The [Active Citizenship Network](#) has proposed such an initiative in the shape of a charter of 14 rights, including the right to quality, to consent, to information, to free choice and to innovation. The right to a "second opinion" should also be recognized.

9. Code of Business Conduct

Decisions on whether or not a medical technology or treatment is ethically acceptable (for example a treatment using embryonic stem cells) should be of the sole competence of the Member States. However, the EU does have a role to play in fostering ethical practices in healthcare and ethical promotion practices. See [Eucomed Code of Business Conduct](#)

10. Appropriate EU budget for health

A larger proportion of the EU budget needs to be devoted to action in the field of public health, in order to ensure that the necessary initiatives are undertaken. This would mean reallocating resources devoted to more traditional areas of EU activity (e.g. agriculture).

About Eucomed

Eucomed represents directly and indirectly 4500 designers, manufacturers and suppliers of medical technology used in the diagnosis, prevention, treatment and amelioration of disease and disability. Small and medium sized companies make up more than 80% of this sector. The European medical technology industry invests some €3,7 billion in R&D and employs near to 445.000 highly skilled workers. The mission of Eucomed is to improve patient and clinician access to modern, innovative and reliable medical technology.



It is estimated that in 2005, total medical technology sales in Europe amounted to €61.8 billion (this figure includes EU25, Bulgaria, Romania, Switzerland and Norway), an increase of 12% since 2003. The global market for medical technology was worth about €187 billion in 2005, with Europe representing one third of the global market, and the US, about 42%.

More information: see www.eucomed.org

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