

Novartis Response to the European Consultation regarding Community action on health services

January 2007

Novartis would like to congratulate the European Commission for this excellent initiative. Novartis shares the Commission's view that there is a need for European Action on health services. We do agree with the European Commission that all Member States face some significant challenges with regard to the long term sustainability of their healthcare systems and endorse fully the Commission's assessment that *'ensuring future sustainability of healthcare and social security systems will therefore require efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness whilst respecting the shared European objectives of universal access to high-quality healthcare on a financially sustainable bases, founded on the principles of equity, equality and solidarity'*.

Providing high quality, affordable health care for a aging population is a significant challenge. Progress in healthcare with discovery of new diagnosis, prevention, and treatments of disease depends on efficient healthcare systems and recognition and implementation of innovation. Novartis also shares the Commission's view that cooperation among Member States as well as exchange of best practices can help Member States to identify the best policies, criteria to measure and benchmark healthcare performance, and as a result improve the efficiency of their systems and reduce costs.

To this end Novartis would like to urge the Commission to take a prominent role in facilitating the exchange of information among the various Member States and in particular:

- a) to conduct regular benchmarking studies at the 'macro' level showing the input and output of the various healthcare systems across Europe;
- b) to compare recognition and implementation of innovation
- c) to compare outcomes for specific diseases across Europe;
- d) to compare outcomes among various specialized medical centers across Europe;
- e) to create an independent Observatory whose mandate would be to conduct these independent surveys.

Undoubtedly, it falls on Member States to shape their own health policies. However, exchange of best practices as well as transparent and clear information on the various systems, their strengths and weaknesses will help both policy makers and European citizens to make informed decisions about future policies.

Furthermore we would like to emphasize the important efficiency gains that Information and Communication Technologies can create. We would thus encourage the Commission to conduct some surveys on whether these technologies have been implemented around the EU and the extent to which they have contributed to reducing cost and/or enhancing quality of service. E-health and tele-medicine have a great potential to allow for a better allocation of resources and create clear cost savings for health care budgets. It is worth finding out whether these opportunities have already been explored in the various Member States and stimulate a discussion on best practices.

We also believe that e-health and telemedicine are likely to make health mobility a more wide-spread phenomenon than it is today. Not only patients can become more easily aware of health services they may find abroad but also health care providers could provide a number of services through distance. This, however, can only be possible if both patients and healthcare providers have more clarity about the rules that will apply in these cases. Will the social security of country X reimburse a tele-consultation with a specialist in country Y? This is likely to become a real issue in particular in areas where there is a shortage of specialized healthcare professionals.

Finally we would also like to add that patient mobility will undoubtedly require clarity in all areas identified in the consultation. However, legislation in this area maybe pre-mature. We believe that the establishment of an independent observatory with the mandate to create transparent data over the functioning of health care systems in Europe, their outputs, the mechanisms for reimbursement etc may be the most effective way forward.

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