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European Commission
DG Health and Consumer Protection
Health Services Consultation
B232 8/102
B-1049 Brussels

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Subject: Health Services Consultation

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the European Social Network (ESN) in response to the consultation regarding Community action on health services. ESN is the network representing social services and other organisations active in the social care sector in Europe. The network is funded by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities under the OMC on social inclusion.

A number of our members are direct health care providers (e.g. Veneto Region in Italy, Health Service Executive in Ireland) and all work in the related field of social care, being the principal providers of social services in local and regional authorities across Europe.

We would like to raise a number of issues about how possible legislation or other measures may relate to and impact on the social care sector. We feel that the interrelationship between health and social care needs to be considered by the Commission – this is not brought out in the consultation document. There are many instances where health treatment requires aftercare or intermediate care which will implicate local and regional social services.

For instance, where health care is provided in a second country, will social care (counselling, support in the home) also be provided by the second country and under what conditions? If a patient decides to return to their home country after

treatment abroad, which is common for certain types of treatment, how can social services pick up the threads of care and support needed for that person?

The same questions of clinical/care oversight, financial responsibility, safety, rights, cross-border reimbursement etc. arise at the intersection of health and social care as in the health sector alone.

These are questions which worth exploring further and may be brought to your attention by other stakeholders. One element of non-legislative European action could be to support a study/project on the interaction of health and social services both with a policy and, essentially, on a practice perspective.

In the social and health sector, our members are well aware that it is hard enough to create synergies and to connect services in one country or even one locality, but this must be even more difficult across national borders, even within the EU. It would useful to consider in your work how health and social services can communicate effectively across borders to provide the best care for the patient.

ESN and our members will have an opportunity to discuss these issues in the months and years to come. In fact, we will hold a seminar in Prague in July on long-term care and we are looking to establish a permanent working group on long-term care and health from 2008. We would be grateful if DG SANCO could keep us informed on this ongoing agenda in order that ESN is able to feed into decisions taken in future.

You will find on our website www.esn-eu.org information about ESN and our work.

With very best regards,

John Halloran
Managing Director
European Social Network (ESN)

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