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From: KEPKA [mailto:consumers@kepka.org]

Sent: Monday, July 26, 2004 2:09 PM

To: SORO Stefano (SANCO)

Cc: Minister of Development; Minister of Health; Subminister of Development; General Secretary of Consumers Ministry of Development; George Papandreou; ASONITIS; SANCO REFLECTION HEALTH STRATEGY

Subject: RE: Reflection process on EU health policy

Importance: High

Dear Mr. Stefano Soro,

It has been a very pleasant experience for us to read Commissioner Byrne's thoughts on european health strategy. We must admit that he has managed to express in writing many of our concerns on this extremely important issue.

We wish to share with the Commissioner and you our thoughts:

1. We agree that poverty and social exclusion are reasons for bad health. We, consumers, have, repeatedly in the past, stressed that poor people cannot afford healthy foods. They are too expensive for them to purchase. Thus, they feed on bad quality foods and they are led to obesity and illness.
2. Smoking cannot be eliminated by only banning smoking in public places. This can lead to increasing smoking in private places as a reaction. Thus, smoking can only be eliminating by raising peoples' conscience on how destructive and harmful on health it can be.
3. As far as fortified food is concerned there must be a campaign that will inform consumers fortified food is not meant to anyone. Only certain groups of people (like athletes) need such food. We stress this issue because, in Greece, there are many mass-media and gymnasiums that promote fortified food to everyday people and just wish to do some physical activity and not become athletes.
4. Consumers face severe problems with labelling. It contains so many scientific terms that it is not understandable by consumers. Many times it does not provide full information like nutritional value or calories or fat, or sugar. Many times claims are misleading (low fat or low sugar). But the percentage of fat or sugar, even if it is lower than in other products, is very high. Junk food must be labeled with warning signs, common for all european countries.
5. We agree that life style must change, in order to have good health. We know that nowadays european citizens spend long hours, sitting, in front of television and eating junk food. Mass media urge us to accept or create new idols, new life styles. So, E.U. should launch a campaign through mass-media to inform people on these health risks (lack of physical activity, eating junk food). We believe that this campaign must not be eliminated to advertisements. Advertisements are really rejected by people. This campaign must take the form of a story (like a series), addressed to different levels: children, adolescents, adults, elderly. We must have in mind that soap operas create strong life-styles.
6. We know that a lot of research is being conducted in E.U., nowadays, funded by DG Research. We believe that a common data base should be established where all new scientific data that have been proven to promote good health must be included.

7. When dealing with health, E.U. should call upon consumers, also. We acknowledge patients' right to have the first word. But patients are much involved in their problems. They do not usually complaint on prices of medicines or health care services. At this point, we wish to stress that industry must never be allowed to advertise medicines or treatments directly to patients.
8. A chart of patients' rights must be established all over Europe, though legislation. There are countries where patients' rights are unknown words, or even if there exists such a chart it is not widely known and it is not implemented.
9. E.U. health policy should include universal aspects. Access to medicines and to health care services should be ensured for all people, universally. We must not forget medicine patents and how much the cost to the developing countries.
10. Car accidents are a cause for loss of lives or heavy injuries. In Greece, every summer weekend, we have about 100 dead and heavily injured people. Driving and pedestrian education should be enforced in schools beginning from primary education.
11. The process of food production many times pollutes environment. Environment influences health to a very high extent. So we need a pan-european sign (something like ecolabel). And this sign must be implemented universally through E.U.'s synergies with other authorities outside Europe.

We want to thank you for your time.

Being always at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

The President, Mr. Nikolaos Tsemperlidis
The Gen.Secretary, Mrs. Evangelia Kekeleki

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