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**David Byrne - Enabling good health for all  
A Reflection process on achieving good health for all across the EU**

**Comments from the Federation of European Cancer Societies**

The Federation of European Cancer Societies (FECS) aims to promote, enhance and coordinate collaboration between European societies active in different fields of cancer research, prevention, treatment and nursing with the ultimate goal of providing best possible treatment and care for all European cancer patients.

The Federation represents more than 18.000 experts from the different oncology disciplines including surgical oncology, radiotherapy, medical oncology, paediatric oncology, nursing oncology, researchers, and several other groups involved in the research and treatment of cancer patients. These disciplines are working together under the umbrella of the Federation to promote the implementation throughout Europe of a multidisciplinary approach in oncology in order to enhance access of cancer patients to quality treatment and care.

Cancer incidence is continuously rising in Europe and it is widely recognised that cancer might become the first cause of death in Europe by the end of the decade.

It is also clearly recognised that there are considerable differences in cancer treatments and outcomes between member states and in the same member state depending on the centre where the patient is treated. Although a multidisciplinary approach (team of health professionals working closely together including pathologists, surgical oncologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists and oncology nurses) is unanimously recognised as the best approach in the treatment of cancer, this is not yet implemented in all member states.

The Federation is also concerned about the anticipated growing shortage across Europe of medical specialists in the various oncology disciplines. This issue is of concern at European level and therefore requires a European strategy.

Therefore the Federation strongly believes that Europe has a role to play, with the member states, to ensure equal access for all cancer patients to high quality healthcare whoever and wherever they are. Cancer patients would strongly benefit from European initiatives aimed at structuring the cooperation between member states which would facilitate the exchanges of best practices and address variations in techniques, resources and treatment outcomes between European countries.

FECS also believes that some types of cancer particularly require a concentration of resources at European level. These include the many forms of cancers in children. For these cancers, the creation of European 'centres of reference' would help providing optimal treatment to all paediatric cancer patients wherever they are in Europe. The optimal model would be a system of shared care under which a 'centre of reference' is responsible for diagnosis, treatment planning and delivery for certain aspects of treatment but where other elements of care may be delivered locally (near to the patient's home) under the direction of the 'Centre of reference'. This approach would require that the centres work in collaboration on the basis of mutually agreed protocols.

Although the collection of data and the definition of indicators which are currently the main focus of the EU Public Health Programme are often necessary to be able to identify best practices, the activities of the EU should go well beyond these initiatives if it wants to reach the goal of ensuring that ‘everybody has easy and prompt access to affordable high quality healthcare whoever and wherever they are’ as said in the Byrne’s reflection process document. The good intentions outlined in this document require a strong political will and commitment from the member states to develop European strategies to address some common issues.

The Federation is trying to follow the activities of the High Level Group on Health Services and Medical Care which was established to address some of the common issues. However, it would welcome more transparency as well as the possibility to provide input and, at least, become a member of the Public Health Forum.

In addition, a high level of quality of healthcare should not only be considered from the point of view of health policies and initiatives led by the EU Public Health Directorate or EU Health Ministers. The EU can help achieving a high level of quality of healthcare in Europe through several EU policy areas having a direct impact on healthcare. The integration of health considerations should not be limited to the prevention aspects when assessing the impact of other policies on public health.

For example:

- 1) in the field of education and continuing medical education, the lack of common core elements at European level in the curriculum of some of the oncology specialties also lead to variations in treatment modalities. There is no guarantee for the patient to access the minimum level of quality treatment. The movement of health professionals between EU countries should be facilitated widening their opportunities to learn about new developments and benefit from new knowledge in their area.
- 2) in the field of enterprise policies, the EU Clinical Trials Directive and the proposed Regulation on medicinal products for paediatric use will have an impact on cancer treatments in Europe. As regards medicinal products for paediatric use, the Federation would like to see a proposal which includes a robust approach to the status of drugs that are out of patent, widely used in the paediatric population. It hopes that the proposal will not only stimulate the development of new and/ or still patent protected products. As regards the adopted EU Clinical Trials Directive, the Federation has serious concerns as regards academic (non sponsored) research. It is willing to collaborate with the relevant authorities at European and national level to ensure implementation of coherent provisions which will safeguard the interests of the academic research, of particular importance in the field of oncology.

**The Federation calls on the EU institutions to increase the cooperation between Member States with the aim to achieve equal access for all cancer patients to optimal quality treatment and to take into consideration the impact of all its policies on the quality of healthcare.**

For further information, please contact Ms Kathleen Vandendael, FECS Executive Director, 83 avenue Mounier – 1200 Brussels, tel: + 32 2 775 02 09, fax: + 32 2 775 02 00, e-mail: [Kathleen@fecf.be](mailto:Kathleen@fecf.be)

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