

For Attn: Mr DAVID BYRNE,

Dear Mr Byrne,

I am a regular visitor to your website in the last number of months in relation to Public Health. I do not hold much confidence in you receiving this mail as I am sure it will be intercepted by some person who works in your administration and who will make their own decision that this particular mail is not important enough for you to deal with. However, whenever I feel there is a glimmer of hope in furthering Public Health and particularly Prevention methods, I will always try.

I have sent two letters to different mailbox's relating to your Public Health Website because I became very interested in your comments on health prevention in Europe. If this is your first time to read any correspondence from me I would like to assure you that the content of my letters are genuine and come from someone who is greatly concerned about the health of people. My letters below are self explanatory, but I would like to re-iterate my thoughts on the MARKETING OF HEALTH. With this in mind I have attached a link from an interesting website which I hope someone in your department will read in conjunction with my recent mails to you. If you delegate a sharp mind from your team who can think outside the boxthey will find a fantastic education right throughout this link page on the top BRANDS in the world. " Good Health " is the Brand which belongs to the governments of the world, but they choose not to invest in it. But they WILL invest in ILL-HEALTH because when people [who are the responsibility of each government] are sick and in pain they cry out for help, only then will government react with paltry, insufficient measures which means that people remain with some level of affected health. There is a saying thatits better to help the blind person across the road than to try to help them when they have been struck by a vehicle they did not see coming towards them. ILL-HEALTH is quite similar, many people don't see it coming towards them.

Coca Cola is a pop-soda that has no particular function in human life , it does not enhance life or add to its education or well-being , its a pop-soda and that's all. Yet this is something that people like to be associated with and yet its assumed benefits are purely abstract. In the top 100 leading Brands in the world, there is not 1 associated with Health. Good health gives us the very intelligence to live, it makes us happy, it makes us love our fellow man. Good health gives us the great academic knowledge to share with our children for the preservation of the human race.I could go on and list a hundred benefits. Astonishingly I never see an advertisement in any medium for mental, emotional,or physical health with all its benefits.

The corporate powers of this world are being allowed to dictate the new order of the human race. They say that governments are supposed to lead their people to the most fulfilling life that they can manage . Well I call on you MR BYRNE right here and now to listen to some advice and put into action, measures that will prevent people being marketed by the corporates into an abyss of questionable lifestyle choices that are contributing towards rises in many avoidable diseases and particularly the downright abuse of children's perceptions of WHAT IS ? correct food to eat. If it is the remit of the PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTORATE to shape health policy throughout Europe in the coming years, then please please start to think like a business. All the most successful businesses in the world have one common link.....THEIR MARKETING STRATEGIES !!!!!!!!!!!!!

If you do not wish to reply to me, this is O K and it will not be a surprise, at least you have my thoughts to think about.

KIND REGARDS

Martin Lawlor

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----- Original Message -----

From: martin lawlor

To: reflection-health-strategy@cec.eu.int

Sent: Thursday, October 07, 2004 5:35 PM

Subject: Observation

Dear sir / madame,

I have decided to write to your office out of the total frustration of what I witness in our Public health system in Ireland. By keeping in touch with your excellent website I am aware of the many initiatives which are aimed at improving our overall general Public Health. It is very encouraging to see so much money being given to projects that are supposed to improve health. Yet , as a person who is very passionate about, talking about and promoting good health practices to prevent disease. In my humble opinion it is sad to see very little evidence of this money being spent on programmes that have real

effect down at the street level where people actually live their lives every day. I admire the efforts of your organisation with the 93 to 2002 programme and also the new programme until 2008. But I fear most of the money allocated to Ireland will end up, not being spent on worthwhile exciting health programmes, but most of it will end up like the multi-billion health budget over the past number of years. The health budget in Ireland has been hijacked by different sectors to create a myriad of employment for administration and management positions and it would appear that the soul purpose of most of these people is to just protect their positions of employment instead of working together to maximize great funding from the likes of your organisation in order to create real purposeful effective measurable health prevention programmes. For such a small country we have a huge ratio of administration people to public patients in hospitals. Our Dept Of Health and particularly our health promotion unit deliver very few initiatives which have been in any way effective in the past ten years. People will point to the great work done to put the smoking ban in place and yes this is fantastic for our country, The reasons I point to our health initiatives being such a dismal failure is because, as one of the most prolific economic powers in Europe over the past ten years. We have managed to top most of the ill-health tables at the same time. Our alcohol consumption has reached epidemic proportions, our drug consumption is heading in the same direction. Obesity in our children is alarming and not to mention our heart disease and cancer rates. Sexually transmitted diseases in our population is at an all time high, I think I will stop there as its too depressing to go on.

I really would love to see some fresh thinking about health prevention ideas. Most of the people who shape our health prevention programmes are Civil Servant people who allow themselves to be controlled by the beaurucratic nature of such departments. Their main concern as I said earlier is not to upset the often sleepy running of an A typical Government Department. So the result of many health prevention programmes are stale and uninspiring information which people don't pay attention too. If one was to challenge this old system, it is amazing how quickly they react to smoother such questions and challenges. One humble suggestion I would put forward is,if the burger restaurants and the take away food are in the main shopping streets along with the places that sell alcohol and the shops that sell sweets and fizzy drinks to our children and the tourist information place, the mortgage advice centre, banking advice for saving,why cant some of the funding you give be allocated to a health information shop, why is there so much money going into research of areas like the human genome when every day right now in 2004 the public health of Europe and particularly in my own country Ireland is degenerating into epidemics that will have indefinable economic consequences for Europe in the next 20 yrs. I fully appreciate how important research is but I question just how much in the context of the creation of interesting prevention programmes that people can actually use now to stop the huge damage being done to public health. I would urge you to allocate at least a decent percentage of funding to fresh ideas that are facing people every day as they walk in the main streets of Europe. We need toplease excuse this term !!!!! but we need to kick the ass of ill-health by competing for people's attention with campaigns that are in your face yet fun and funky. Coca Cola and McDonalds just to name two companies are two of the most recognisable names in the world. The reason for this is simple, its because they market themselves very wellno other ! . The health budget of Europe is massive and much bigger than a lot of the companies that market products that contribute to current lifestyles. Marketing HEALTH is the way for prevention programmes to be a major success. I would rather spend 100 billion euros on marketing fresh approaches to health prevention than the indefinable cost of re-active health measures that just leave people in a debilitating state of existence.

If your own organisation suffers from the same political beauracracy that I mentioned above, I would ask that SOME person be given the task of at least examining the type of programmes that your funding covers in order to ascertain if good health prevention information actually ends up on the street with people and not locked away in the creation of another meaningless health administration position. Ireland up to 1994 was much like many of the accession states who are now entering our union. We were relatively poor with no great level of infrastructure. Our great economic boom has been heralded all over the world and many countries will aim to emulate us in the comming years. What has not been spoken about is our abysmal public health record and its current consequences, our record levels of marital breakdown with huge stress levels leading to a massive rise in our suicide rates and the potential of a healthy future for our young children left in the balance. I consider myself to be Irish but now a European also, I would ask you to examine Ireland as a model for our fellow new European states to look at and pay attention to reaching a good balance of proper public health issues and not just the material monetary gain that may happen. I do not wish to offend any body with this letter but I do hope it stimulates some level of debate that leads to some real action on checking exactly how your funding is really spent. I am passionate about the health of people and because we have such a problem in Ireland, I am perhaps a little less diplomatic than I would normally be. I wish

your organisation continued success as it is a great source of valuable information for people like myself who are passionate about the health of people.

Kind Regards

Martin Lawlor

P S : I had already sent a copy of this letter to the SANCO-MAILBOX 28th sept, hoping to receive a reply from the team of Mr Byrne. I am disappointed that there was not even an auto reply to say it had been received. I hope this letter offers an objective view on where HEALTH PROMOTION really needs to be and that is, right down at street level where the citizens of Europe actually live and breathe their daily lives. Comm Byrne's comments are very commendable, But I would urge Mr Byrne to concentrate on what's realistically happening at the moment. Due to the food and lifestyle choices of the last 7 to 10 years, we [Europe] have a huge group of young people 13yrs to 16yrs who will have at this moment a number of risk factors relating to obesity, diabetes T / 2 and C H D. Please fight this most important battle with illhealth on the streets with visual propoganda , high street events and displays of health promotion that actually MARKET health to all people but especially our young, as hip, funky , cool . The contributors to the health epidemics sweeping Europe i e. over-weight - obesity - c h d - stress - etc etc are the big companies who over many years have fine tuned their own marketing expertise to draw people to their services and products. Why dont we just learn from them and use their techniquesto turn the tables and make Good HEALTH to be seen as socially acceptable and something thats seen as Cool. If I may suggest with great humbleness and humility that we stop talking about all the great things that are happening in the laboratories and the great commissions of health and the things you hear at the conferences. For very little money Europe could set up a health promotion Roadshow for each country in the union. I suggest that this be taken out of the hands of the governmet agencies as this would end up as a politcal football. Put the shows on the road and direct them from Europe and I guarantee these Health Roadshows would be given great coverage by every TELEVISION station in Europe. People are not really interested in news from commissions and labs and conferences, its what you place in front of people every day that affects there daily choicesagain its called MARKETING.....PUT HEALTH PROMOTION IN FRONT OF PEOPLE EVERY DAY AND YOU WILL GET YOUR RESULTS.

KIND REGARDS

MARTIN LAWLOR

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