

SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
SWEDISH FEDERATION OF COUNTY COUNCILS  
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## **Enabling Good Health for All**

### **A reflection process for a new Health Strategy**

The secretariats of the Swedish Federation of County Councils (the Federation) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (the Association) have discussed the above paper from the European Commission and have the following points of view.

It is positive that the Commission:

- focuses on reducing inequalities in the health status between different sections of the population and between the member states. The Federation and the Association assume that this is being done with due respect for the Treaty,
- is of the opinion that good health should be a driving force behind all policy-making,
- wishes to see a change in emphasis from treatment to promoting good health,
- lays down that health systems are the responsibility of the Member States
- wishes to see linkages to the research policy and to give prominence to fields that are important for health in the forthcoming 7<sup>th</sup> RTD framework programme.

The Federation and Association wish to see a deeper discussion of the following matters:

- that the Commission emphasizes the importance of involving the citizens in policy making. The exertion of direct influence by citizens can be positive. However, it can also have the effect that the groups of citizens and patients that have the loudest voice acquire most influence,

and not those who have the greatest needs. This can thus counteract the aim of reducing differences in health. In Sweden directly elected local and regional politicians are responsible for public health and health care: a democratic system that the Federation and Association wish to give prominence to.

- that the Commission wishes to show that Europe is good for health. It is important that, in this respect, the point of departure is the best interests of the citizens and not those of the EU.
- how a solid base of knowledge can fulfil an important task. The Federation and the Association would point out that those responsible for health systems should be engaged in the work of developing this knowledge to ensure that it meets existing needs and is user-friendly.
- that spare capacity in the health services in some parts of the EU should be utilised to advantage for those areas where there is a lack of capacity. This is a question that has implications for the health systems of the Member States and should be the subject of in-depth discussion with those responsible for the health systems.
- that the health situation in countries bordering the EU is taken into consideration. In some of these countries the situation is serious, particularly where infectious diseases are concerned.

The Federation and the Association want to express their doubts about the following.

- it shall be possible for everyone to have access to health and medical systems in all contexts. Health and medical services should be based on established medical needs.
- that, in “Partnerships for Health in Europe”, the Commission proposes better communication with patients on medicines and alternative forms of treatment through “public-private partnerships”. The attitude of the Federation and the Association regarding advertisements for medicines (which is often the result) to the general public is that they should also be banned in the future. Involving industry and, at the same time, keeping information to the general public independent and unbiased will be difficult. It is also quite clear that information on medicines of a more independent character is needed, both for the general public and for the health services.
- that the Commission proposes to “create a European vision for health systems with health objectives shared by the Member states”. The health systems differ considerably and are based on different values and it is therefore difficult to create a common vision. Moreover, the health systems are the responsibility of the Member States.

Finally the Federation and the Association want to emphasize how important it is

- that those who are democratically elected and are responsible for public health and health systems are able to exert an influence on the EU's health policy. Conditions for good health are created close to the citizens, and it must be guaranteed that the regions or the equivalent that are responsible for the health sector can exert an influence on the EU's health policy.
- that work to reduce tobacco consumption and to promote healthier eating habits is intensified and that the Commission works actively for a powerful strategy in respect of alcohol. Furthermore, measures taken in respect of resistance to antibiotics should be given the utmost importance.
- that the EU's agricultural policy is changed in such a way that it serves the health of the citizens. This issue<sup>1</sup> is of crucial importance in creating credibility in the work of enabling good health for all as a driving force behind all policy-making.

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