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ЕВРОПЕЙСКА АСОЦИАЦИЯ НА СТАРШИТЕ БОЛНИЧНИ ЛЕКАРИ**

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**Dr. Jorgo Chatzimarkakis MEP and The Centre invite you to a roundtable discussion
on**

Health Tourism in Europe

With:

Markos Kyprianou, EU Commissioner for Health & Consumer Protection

Roundtable 10 October 2006

The meeting with this rather provocative title had been organised by a Brussels think-tank and a German MEP Dr Chatzimarkakis who had also organized or initiated the « European Life Science Circle », which President Lies and President Mart attended.

Commissioner Kyprianou was supposed to be the political key note speaker but cancelled his participation shortly before the meeting. He was replaced by Nick Fahy, deputy head of the health strategy unit in DG SANCO.

Other representative from the European commission was Mrs Géraldine Fagès, legal officer from DG Internal Market & Services.

Opening Remarks

Mr Chatzimarkakis defended in his introduction the idea of combining travelling with seeking medical treatment abroad and named holidays being an ideal time for medical check-ups. He gave his vision of European health tourism and praised diets and cooking lessons, spas and wellness centres. He definitely tried to represent health in a new light.

Community action on health services – The Commission Communication and steps forward

Nick Fahy said himself troubled to associate Health and Tourism although he recognized that there is a trend in Europe for a priority shift from curative to preventive care. He pointed out the project of a health service directive and reminded that the patients brought up this issue of health services and not the commission. The ECJ rulings on reimbursement of health care created jurisprudence. He invited all interested parties to answer the public consultation which the European Commission had launched a few days before.

A perspective from the DG Internal Market & Services

Géraldine Fagès took up the subject of reimbursement, which in great part is already ruled for years first by the E111 which was replaced by the E-health card but already since 1971 by the “Council regulation 1048/71 on the application system of social security schemes to employed persons, to self-employed persons and to members of their families moving within the Community.” The ECJ took so far 9 decisions in favour of patients and against national social security systems but member states have never been taken to court.

Preview on the health services question within the German Presidency of the Council

Frank Niggemeier, Health Councillor from the German Permanent Representation quoted some events which will be organised under the German Presidency (1st half 2007) which made innovation the key topic. Health ministers will be invited to a conference on health care systems in EU 15-16 January in Potsdam, where a first evaluation of the public consultation on health services will be made. A 2nd evaluation will take place at an informal meeting 19-20th April 2007.

Concerning the term health tourism he strongly advocated to differentiate 'medical care and patient mobility' from 'wellness tourism for leisure'. He quoted the 4 EU values on free movements of persons, goods, services, capital and questioned whether some ECJ rulings stipulating that hospital pre-authorisation is required is compatible with these free movement laws.

The following speakers promoted again their idea of health care where terms like clients and "business to business" (i.e. patients to medical centres) were evoked. Especially the spa centres were highly promoted.

Conclusion: the meeting was a lobbying act from the spa and wellness industry seeking to be recognised as medical care centres.