

PRESS RELEASE

Chronic conditions cost the EU the equivalent of 28 Irish bailouts – every year

EPPOSI launches multi-stakeholder Task Force
to develop new management model for chronic conditions

Brussels, Belgium , 10 December 2010 The annual costs to the EU of managing chronic conditions dwarf the size of the financial bailouts recently agreed for Greece and Ireland. An estimated €2.400 billion is lost each year through premature retirement alone and most of this is caused by chronic disorders due to problems at work or problems made worse by work, according to figures announced yesterday by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) at a multi-stakeholder workshop convened in Brussels. “Managers must monitor employee sickness more closely and be prepared to give much earlier support to staff to enable them to return to work. Once they’ve been out for six months it’s very difficult to get them back into work,” said Dr Jukka Takala, EU-OSHA’s Director, “often with devastating consequences for their future employment prospects.”

The meeting, organised by EPPOSI (European Platform for Patients’ Organisations, Science and Industry), under the auspices of the Belgian EU Presidency, brought together over 70 representatives of patients’ associations, healthcare professionals, EU and national policy-makers, e-health strategists, academics, employers, health insurers, medical device manufacturers and the pharmaceutical industries. The aim was to develop the principles of a new European model in line with the Council conclusions announced on 7 December.

Chronic conditions cover a wide spectrum of health and social issues from cardiovascular and respiratory to physical disability, musculo-skeletal disorders and mental health. The risk factors, including tobacco use, stress, poor workplace design, obesity, poor nutrition, alcohol abuse and lack of exercise, are well known and largely preventable, if diagnosed and treated early enough. Despite this, they are the cause of 86% of premature deaths in the WHO European Region and the number of sufferers – and economic cost - is set to continue to rise as European society ages.

However, with budgets under pressure from national government austerity measures in many EU countries, “the only way out of the crisis is to innovate,” said Ilias Iakovidis, Deputy Head of the ICT for Health Unit at DG Information Society and Media at the European Commission. “Bringing value from resources that were so far under-utilised, such as information and patients, can make the difference. We need to use Europe’s strengths in IT and R&D to create new European innovation partnerships to scale up the benefits and reduce the costs”, he added. The Commission is now piloting the first of these innovation partnerships in the area of active and healthy ageing.

For patients, “guided self-management is the answer to many of the questions here today,” said Susanna Palkonen, Executive Officer of the European Federation of Allergy and Airway Diseases Patients’ Association (EFA). She added, “the tools to implement it should be available for patients and their treating healthcare professionals across the EU.”

The outcomes of the workshop discussions will now be developed by a multi-stakeholder Task Force, to be set up by EPPOSI in early 2011 as part of a new thematic programme on chronic conditions management. The model will be available for use by governments and non-state actors as part of the 2012 reflection process document called for in the Council conclusions of 7 December.

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Notes to Editors

1 **About EPPOSI**

Founded in 1994, EPPOSI (European Platform for Patients' Organisations, Science and Industry) is an independent, not-for-profit, partnership-based and multi-stakeholder think tank based in Brussels, Belgium, committed to making the EU-2020 strategic vision work through the health and well being of its citizens. EPPOSI is open to members from EU-facing patients' organisations, economic actors, research institutes, professional and business federations, trade unions, diplomatic missions, regional bodies, as well as NGOs representing a broad range of civil society interests, foundations, international and religious organisations. www.epposi.org

2 **Innovative approaches for chronic diseases in public health and healthcare systems**

3053rd EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY HEALTH and CONSUMER AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 7 December 2010

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/118282.pdf

3 **Consultation on the pilot European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing**

The European Commission is seeking the views of public and private organisations, companies and individual citizens on how Europe could scale up innovation to meet the challenges of the ageing population in Europe, and in particular on a pilot European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Europeans aged over 65 will rise by nearly 40%, posing huge challenges but also offering great opportunities for Europe's society and economy. The EIP, due to be launched in 2011, will seek to improve the health and quality of life of older people, enabling them to live active and independent lives, to contribute to the sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems; and to foster competitiveness and growth of businesses. The online consultation runs until 28 January 2011.

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/deployment/ahaip/consultation/index_en.htm