

## Editorial

### Miroslav Mikolášik MEP

It is my pleasure to share with you a good news that during the plenary session in May the Directive on Standards of Quality and Safety of Human Organs Intended for Transplantation was adopted in the European Parliament with an overwhelming majority. I believe our effort will bring its results and improve quality of life of thousands of patients all over the European Union.

As we could have witnessed over past five decades, organ transplantation has been transformed from an extraordinary exercise in immunobiology to the most practical way of rehabilitating patients with the illnesses resulting in fatal kidney, liver, heart, lung and pancreas diseases. It has become an established and efficient worldwide practice which tremendously improves quality and extends the life expectancy of our patients. Nowadays, we need to pay significant attention to the reality, that in the countries of the European Union, there are more than 60 000 people on waiting lists to receive a functioning organ. But what is even more alarming in this context, is the fact that the number of patients on the waiting lists increases much faster than the number of organs available for transplantation. Shortage of organs is therefore a major factor affecting transplantation programmes. However we can not also forget and ignore that scarcity of organs and imbalance between need and availability might lead to the cases of commercialization and illegal organ trafficking.

Meanwhile shortage of organs remains the most important challenge, there are many more with regard to the different transplantation systems applied in Member States. Therefore, the new Directive seeks to enhance the cooperation and cross border exchange between Member States, which has an impressive potential to increase number of transplantations. In order to ensure high level of health protection throughout the European Union, the Directive effectively establishes common binding standards of quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation. It entirely completes the framework of legislation on human blood, tissues, cells and organs. As medical doctor, I appreciate very much the text which has achieved a broad support. In particular, I highly welcome the principal and key aims of the Directive.

First of all, the objective to ensure the quality and safety for patients at the EU level, secondly, ensuring the protection of donors and last but not least facilitating the cooperation between Member States. In general, in the European Union there is broad societal consensus

on organ donation for the purpose of transplantation. However, due to different cultural, traditional or organizational system background, there are still differences between Member States in approach to this issue.

As matter of principle, organ transplantation programmes are based on the principle of voluntary and unpaid donation. I am fully supporting the principal that organ donation must be always a free gift and protected from any linkage to possible commercialization. I am glad we successfully defended this very principle. Moreover, I consider the organ donation as a gift and supports expression of altruism and solidarity in the society. Traceability of organs from the donor to the recipient and vice versa represents one of the major safety concerns, therefore sound data protection measures of donor and recipient must be introduced.

Although, large differences in organ donation and transplantation shows that some organisational models perform better than the others. Sharing of the best practices, models and expertise across the European Union has already proved as being useful in increasing organ donor rates. Therefore, in my opinion, the cooperation should be fostered in order to identify successful elements of different transplantation systems and promote them on the European level, thus leading to the improvements in provision of high quality and safety of organ donation and transplantation.

Miroslav Mikolášik MEP



**HFE at 1st European Congress of Private Hospitalization**

On 27 and 28 May 2010, HFE's Honorary President John Bowis attended the 1st European Congress of Private Hospitalization in Paris that was organized by the European Union of Private Hospitals (UEHP).

The themes of the Congress – "Towards a Europe for Health: free choice, efficiency and quality of healthcare" and "Why Europe needs private hospitals" – presented a unique opportunity to establish a dialogue on the importance and centrality of private hospitals to the provision of healthcare in the EU.

John Bowis gave a presentation on free access, healthcare quality and sustainability focused on how these fundamental values are being represented at the EU policy level. Also in attendance were prominent politicians and health stakeholders, including Commissioner Dalli, MEPs Grossetête, Parvanova, and others, presidents of national Private Hospitals Federations, and a number of UEHP representatives, among others.

*For the programme, please click [here](#).*

**HFE on Recast of Late Payments Directive**

On 24 March, HFE attended an event on the late payment draft directive and its impact on the health-care sector and, ultimately, on patients.

In line with this event, the Parliament Magazine published a contribution article by John Bowis in the 5 April edition, which outlined concerns about the effect of late or unpaid bills on patient access to innovative healthcare.

On 28 April the IMCO committee voted on the Weiler Report (drafted by Rapporteur and MEP Barbara Weiler, S&D, Germany) to amend the draft proposal of the recast of the Directive to exempt public healthcare providers from the 30-day payment period, in favour of a 60-day timeframe instead. The IMCO compromise also deletes lump sum compensation and replaces up-front penalty on late payers with higher interest rates on delayed payments.

This new proposal on late payment was released by the European Commission with an objective to tackle the side effects of the economic recession on SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).

The compromise was presented to the European Parliament on 4 May and will be voted on during its first reading at the EP plenary session on 8 July.

*To access the full article, please click [here](#).*

**John Bowis' Article on Needlestick Injuries in Journal of Paramedic Practice**

Following the 8 March EPSCO Council adoption of the Directive on the prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector, HFE's Honorary President, John Bowis contributed to an article celebrating the adoption in the Journal of Paramedic Practice.

Called "Europe get serious about minimizing needlestick injuries," the article comments on the new directive and its significance to paramedic practice. In particular, it spells out hope that new rules on safer procedures for using and disposing of sharp medical equipment by paramedics on the job will significantly reduce the number of injuries associated with such use.

John Bowis particularly commends MEPs and HFE supporters Elizabeth Lynn (ALDE, UK) and Stephen Hughes (S&D, UK) for their work in pushing the initiative forward.

*For a link to the article, please click [here](#).*

**HFE attended the V International Conference on Patient Safety and antimicrobial resistance**

HFE attended last 3 and 4 June the V International Conference on Patient Safety and antimicrobial resistance that was held under the Spanish Presidency in Madrid.

Health experts and practitioners discussed the current state of art on patient safety and antimicrobial resistance from the management, decision-making and patient perspective.

Healthcare-related infections affect some 4.1 million patients in Europe every year, of which 37,000 die. Experts expressed their concerns on how to prevent these infections and how to combat drug resistance. The representatives of the Spanish Presidency presented different best practices examples that had been developed and implemented at member state level and that have had very good results.

The different presentations stressed the differences from country to country and from region to region when it comes to the managing and prevention of HCAs.

Preventing these infections and drug-resistance are therefore goals shared by the EC and the WHO, who will actively participate in the conference to share experiences at national and international level with doctors, researchers, managers and patients.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

### Eucomed elects new Board of Directors

On 13 April, Eucomed members elected a new Board of Directors, including a second term for Guy J. Lebeau, M.D., Company Group Chairman, Roy Bridges and Alain Coudray as Vice-Chairmen, and Thierry Sarda as Treasurer. This is the first change of the organization's structure in over ten years.

The newly enlarged Board is composed of 15 senior representatives from corporate and national association members as well as sector group representatives.

In a press release, Eucomed's Chief Executive John Wilkinson explained that the purpose of the expansion was to "give a larger voice to our network of national associations which are key for us to act effectively across Europe going forward."

To read the press release, please click [here](#).

### EFN celebrates International Nurses Day

On 12 May, the European Federation of Nurses (EFN) celebrated International Nurses Day by calling for the launch of the declaration on the EU Workforce for Health in order to safeguard the quality and safety of care for all European citizens through effective and sustainable recruitment and retention strategies in the health sector.

Shortly thereafter, on 17 May, the European Parliament launched a Written Declaration on the EU Workforce for Health at their plenary session in Strasbourg. The declaration was tabled by Oana Elena Antonescu MEP (Romania, EPP), Jean Lambert MEP (UK, Greens/EFA), Antonia Parvanova MEP (Bulgaria, ALDE), Marc Tarabella MEP (Belgium, S&D) and Thomas Ulmer MEP (Germany, EPP). It will be

open for signatures between 17 May and 17 September.

For more information, please click [here](#).

### 11th EFORT Congress in Madrid

On 2-5 June, the European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (EFORT) held their 11th Congress in Madrid. In honor of the incumbent Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Congress was held in cooperation with the Spanish Orthopaedic and Traumatology Society (SECOT).

New to this year's Congress was the organization of plenary sessions for speakers to present innovative treatments in orthopaedics in four specific subjects – general, trauma, infection and bone and joint tumors.

The Congress was a successful meeting of minds that shape EU policy on healthcare areas. Future Congresses are planned for Copenhagen and Berlin.

### IAPO's involvement at the World Health Assembly (WHA)

In May, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) participated in the World Health Organization's 63rd World Health Assembly in Geneva. IAPO was proud to represent the patient voice during the event.

The event focused on noncommunicable diseases and the challenges posed to people and families living with them.

For more information, please click [here](#).

## EU News

### Europe 2020 Strategy

Last 17 June, the Europe 2020 Strategy: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was officially adopted. The Council gave political approval to integrated guidelines and country-specific targets that will be formally adopted once the European Parliament has published its opinion on the issue.

Now the specific guidelines and targets approved in the areas of education, social inclusion and poverty

reduction will need to be implemented at the Member State level while considering how they will tackle any emerging obstacles to growth and development during the process.

Despite scepticism by the British prime minister, David Cameron, due to the budget deficit, the adoption was met with approval by current president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and received approval from the current President of

the EU Presidency - the Spanish prime minister, José Luis Zapatero, and the Belgian prime minister (who will soon be the next acting chair of the EU), Yves Leterme, who added an emphasis on industrial policy to stimulate the economy.

The next steps outlined in the adoption include further discussions on specific innovation and energy policies in the coming months, development of an ambitious position of the EU on financial regulation presented at the G20 Toronto Summit on 26-27 June, and a final report of the Task Force on the stability and growth pact to come out in October.

To read the full Council document, please click [here](#).

## EU Adopts a Digital Agenda Strategy

As one of the seven flagships of the Europe 2020 Strategy, initiatives are in the works to adopt a Digital Agenda for Europe aimed to deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra fast internet and interoperable applications.

On 31 May, European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes presented the Commission Communication on the adoption of the agenda at the meeting of EU Telecoms Ministers and Council of Transport Telecommunications and Energy Ministers. It was partially inspired by the report drafted by former Competition Commissioner, Professor Mario Monti, on a single market for Europe.

In the areas of health, the EU Digital Agenda promotes cross-border healthcare and especially e-health. It proposes having secure online medical access for all European citizens by 2015, widespread deployment of telemedicine by 2020 and interoperability of electronic medical records by 2012.

On 14 June, an EU Ministerial Meeting on Information Society Policies and Metrics was held in Madrid in order to propose a common framework for dialogue and cooperation on improving ICT methodologies. The objectives given to EU Member States are "to provide Key Performance Indicators, adequately cover the goals in the Digital Agenda and optimally implement subsequent national policies."

Such a proposal can be expected to promote the uptake of eHealth by developing a common ICT framework. The future of the Digital Agenda's role in furthering other healthcare priorities will likely take shape as part of the 31 legislative initiatives

scheduled to be put forward by the European Commission within the next two to three years.

To read the Digital Agenda Strategy, please click [here](#).  
To read the Spanish Presidency's endorsement document, please click [here](#).



## Spain to hand over EU Council Presidency to Belgium

On 1 July, Belgium is to replace the Spanish Presidency of the EU, as the second in the Trio Presidency Programme of Spain, Belgium and Hungary from 2010-2011. The Prime Minister of Belgium, Yves Leterme, was welcomed into the post on 24 June by President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek and the members of the Conference of Presidents, the EP's political group leaders.

The working programme of the Belgian Presidency was announced on 25 June, when Mr Leterme revealed their motto of "time for action" and a theme of "solidarity and innovation."

Among the presidency's top priorities are fostering sustainable growth and economic recovery by finalizing the External Action Service and implementing the Lisbon Treaty. In line with this objective, the BE Presidency plans to establish a Financial Supervisory Authority by the end of 2011 in order to regulate hedge funds and other volatile financial bodies.

In accordance with their theme on solidarity and innovation, the work programme intends to address health issues like chronic diseases, which will strain future healthcare systems along with ageing demographics. In addition, they plan to address healthcare workers rights through a Workforce for Health, as well as innovation in pharmaceuticals and the influenza pandemic.

Despite Belgium's reputation as a divided society and its stalled administration postings, Mr Leterme was confident that Belgium is ready to take on the EU Presidency come 1 July.

For more information, please click [here](#).

## **European Commission Adopts Directive on Organ Donation & Transplantation**

On 19 May, the European Parliament adopted the directive on the standards of quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation. Upon the adoption, MEP and Rapporteur Miroslav Mikolášik said “this is an important milestone in the history and success of transplantations. I welcome the smooth adoption of the Directive and Action Plan. By setting high standards for quality and safety of the transplantation process, we can help thousands of patients throughout the EU.”

The Directive was endorsed by 643 votes to 16, amid eight abstentions, and was accompanied by an approval of the Commission’s 2009-2015 action plan on organ donation and transplantation, drafted by Andrés Perelló Rodríguez (S&D, Spain). It will come into force later this year, after which national governments have two years to transpose it into national legislation.

Highlights of the Directive include the mandatory provision of a national authority in each member state who will be responsible for maintaining quality and safety standards for organs intended for transplantation as well as the recommendation of an EU database of organs and organ donors. Moreover, new rules mandate all organ donations to be voluntary and unpaid, with the exception of some compensation in living donor cases, and place a ban on advertising of organs for financial gain. These steps should ensure shorter waiting times for people needing organ transplants.

*To read the press release, please click [here](#).*

## **EPSCO Council reaches political agreement on cross-border healthcare**

On 8 June, during the EPSCO Council meeting of ministers on health and consumer policy, a broad majority was reached regarding the Spanish Presidency’s compromise draft directive on patients’ rights in cross-border healthcare. Despite disagreement from Poland, Slovakia and Portugal, the draft directive reached the political agreement necessary to pass on further negotiations to the European Parliament.

Among the Ministers who disagreed, their main issues of contention centered around article 8.3a with regards to patients enjoying the same rights when receiving cross-border healthcare as they would have enjoyed if they had received comparable healthcare in their home country. Some Ministers felt that this may deny some rights to the less-privileged populations, like the poor and immobile. There were also disagreements on legislation referring to

non-contracted providers and the balance between EU and national level legislation.

The political agreement also included the 3 June UK and German versions that added an article on facilitating e-health and interoperability. This point was largely agreed upon as the key to the future of healthcare provision. Also largely agreed upon was upholding the values of quality and safety of healthcare for all European citizens.

The draft directive now goes to the European Parliament to be finalized and voted upon.

*To read the draft directive, please click [here](#).*

## **Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU endorsed**

At the 7 June meeting of employment and social policy ministers, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) formally endorsed the opinion of the Social Protection Committee on “Solidarity in Health: reducing health inequalities in the EU”. The Social Protection Committee, which serves as a tool for cooperation exchange between Member States and the European Commission on health issues, released their opinion on health inequalities last 20 May.

In its opinion, the Social Protection Committee highlighted the reduction of health inequalities as a key issue for social protection and inclusion. It also revealed specific initiatives that require EU support, including the definition of a restricted number of indicators, special actions for vulnerable groups, the exchange of best practices and funding of innovative action on health inequalities under the PROGRESS programme.

Also in the opinion, the Committee welcomed the original European Commission document from 2009 calling for the mitigation of large gaps in health which exist between and within EU Member States.

The endorsed document is now the responsibility of the ENVI Committee, whose dossier outlines a number of specific areas to be looked at with respect to health inequalities. Some of these are health and safety at work, medicine for diseases, health services, medical institutions and consumer health.

In its next stage, the directive goes to the European Parliament for a first reading, most likely scheduled for 30 November 2010 followed by a plenary on 13 December.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

### **01-03/07/10: 12th International Conference on eHealth Networking, Application and Services**

As the eHealth agenda progresses in the EU, the 12th International Conference on eHealth Networking, Application and Services will presumably further this effort. It will be hosted by the IEEE Communications Society and is scheduled to take place on 1-3 July in Lyon, France.

The topic for this year's Conference – "Ambient Assistant Living for Better Health" – will focus on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in all aspects of healthcare, especially the ability of eHealth tools to combat issues associated with ageing, such as chronic diseases.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

### **28/08-01/09/10: ESC 2010 Congress**

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) will be hosting its 2010 Congress on 28 August – 1 September in Stockholm, Sweden. This extensive one week Congress will highlight current issues in the field of cardiology, spanning everything from how-to sessions to clinical seminars. It will bring together more than 4,100 abstracts from delegates and health stakeholders from all over the world.

The ESC Congress is currently the largest cardiovascular medicine meeting in the world.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

### **22-23/11/10: EHTEL 2010 eHealth Symposium**

In collaboration with AER and EUREGHA, the European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL) is organizing an eHealth Symposium for 22-23 November in Brussels. It will be supported by the Committee of Regions.

The focus of the symposium will be on trans-regional collaboration in healthcare and an investigation into the role of eHealth in this collaboration. More detailed information will be known as the event approaches.

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

### **Other events:**

#### **28/06-02/07/10: 6th Annual Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health**

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

#### **11/07/10: 11th International Congress on Obesity 2010**

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

#### **17/07/10: 16th World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology 2010**

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

#### **18-23/07/10: International AIDS Conference**

*For more information, please click [here](#).*

**For more information, please visit [www.healthfirsteurope.org](http://www.healthfirsteurope.org)**