



# The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

UEMS News 2008 / 03

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## Main issues

The European Parliament recently adopted a resolution proposing measures to handle the issues of organ shortage and organ trafficking.

p.2

The decision modifying directive on physical agents and electromagnetic fields (2004/40/EC) was formally endorsed.

p.2

MEPs approved the new European Health Commissioner Ms Androula Vassiliou. Addressing the EP, she notably announced the release of the draft directive on patient mobility in June.

p.3

## In this issue

Organ donation and transplantation	2
Irish private health insurance	2
Postponed EMF directive	2
New Health Commissioner	3
The future of the health sector	3
Events & Publications	4

## CME Credits in Europe: An obstacle to mobility?

Michl Ebner, an Italian Member of the European Parliament (MEP), recently addressed the following written question to the European Commission. In order to provide you with a complete overview of this issue, we reproduced the texts of the question and answer in full:

### ***CME Credits in Europe: An obstacle to mobility?***

*If Europe is really to become a knowledge society and achieve the internal market goals laid down in the Treaties, it must be made possible for qualifications earned through education and training to be recognised without problems arising.*

*A number of Member States are currently making use, to varying degrees, of the American CME credit system for the mutual recognition of courses in Medicine and Physics. This system is very lacking in transparency and often entails red tape, thereby constituting at the very least a negative incentive to researchers and doctors in terms of mobility.*

*1. Is the Commission aware of this state of affairs?*

*2. On the basis of its current powers, what specific possibilities does the Commission see for the introduction of a binding system of recognition (direct 1:1 recognition without regional or national recognition boards), or at least a single, voluntary framework for CME credits, comparable to the European Qualifications Framework?*

### ***Answer given by Mr McCreevy, European Commissioner in charge of Internal Market & Services, on behalf of the Commission***

*"The Commission is aware of the fact that Continued Medical Education (CME) can differ greatly between the different Member States. Not only with regard to its compulsory character but also the ways in which it is implemented and organised. However, the Commission is not aware of the fact that some Member States are currently making use of the American CME Credit system for the mutual recognition of CME courses in Medicine and Physics.*

*Currently, CME credits cannot constitute an obstacle to doctors wishing to establish themselves in another Member State, since the recognition of medical qualifications under Directive 2005/36/EC is based on harmonised minimum training requirements and automatic recognition of medical qualification titles. Member States may impose continued professional development on professionals established on their territory. However, they cannot require it for the purpose of migration, be it on a permanent or temporary basis.*

*The introduction of a binding system of recognition of CME could only be based on minimum harmonised CME standards, in order not to prejudice the automatic recognition of medical professional qualifications.*

*This would require unanimity among all Member States. Nevertheless, the Commission welcomes initiatives taken by and between stakeholders, such as the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME), established by the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS), which facilitates recognition of CME events throughout the European Union and helps to bring about more transparency and comparability of CME at national level."*

*The UEMS Executive is encouraged by this recognition from the Commission of the importance of the EACCME. This acknowledges the considerable contribution of the EACCME over the last 8 years. The UEMS looks forward to continuing close cooperation with the European Commission and Parliament to ensure that we achieve high standards of CME for all European doctors.*

## European Parliament

### EU takes moves to handle issues related to organ donation and transplantation

*The European Parliament recently adopted a resolution proposing measures to handle the issues of organ shortage and organ trafficking. The EP asserted that organ donation has to remain "non commercial" and that the Commission, Europol and Member States must take measures against organ trafficking and "transplant tourism".*

#### Improving information for European Citizens

The EP proposes creating a European donor card in addition to existing national cards. A card should be also made available for European citizens who are not suitable donors. The

resolution also proposes the appointment of a legal representative who can decide on organ donation in case of one's death.

The Committee which elaborated this resolution emphasised that "a very effective way of increasing organ availability is to provide more information to the public". An information hotline in each Member State, managed by the competent agency should therefore be created, in order to make information about organ donation available 24/7.

#### European cooperation

The resolution in question also calls for an enhanced cooperation between Mem-

ber States to fight organ shortages. The EP supports reinforced cooperation between Member States leading to increased organ sharing between EU Member States. The report highlights that such cooperation would benefit especially to small Member States which have restricted donor population.

#### Fostered research

MEPs also encourage the Commission to promote research in biotechnologies which "may offer the possibility for researchers to grow organs from existing tissues and cells, either from the patients themselves or from other tissue donors".

Any  
commercial  
exploitation  
of organs is  
unethical  
and  
inconsistent  
with the  
most basic  
human  
values.

**Dr Adamos  
Adamou**  
**EP Rapporteur**

## Irish private health insurance loses in court

*The Court of First Instance (CFI) recently ruled against Bupa, an international company of private health insurance, in its case against the Irish government.*

Bupa complained about a health plan providing that the insurance companies assuring below-average risks must compensate the companies assuring higher

risks. This thus obliged Bupa to pay the state-owned Voluntary Health Insurance Board (VHI) which assures more elderly patients. Bupa considered that it was an illegal subsidy thus distorting free competition. The European Commission and the CFI ruled that these payments were justified since they enter within the framework

of the Services of General Economic Interest whose definition remains largely in charge of the Member States, especially in regard to health care. Quinn, the company which overtook Bupa's Irish operations last year, declared that there remained many issues concerning free competition which support the dominant status of the VHI.

## Postponement of EMF directive confirmed

*The European Commission's proposal (2008/46/EC) modifying directive on physical agents and electromagnetic fields (2004/40/EC) was formally signed by the European Parliament and the European Council on 23rd of April 2008.*

This controversial directive

will then be delayed for four years until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 to allow to the European Commission to carry out a comprehensive impact assessment of the directive and a broad stakeholder consultation.

This decision was welcomed by the Alliance for MRI, which was established

to bring together representative organisation of patients, professionals and the industry to address this issue. The Alliance committed itself to continuing to contribute and monitor the work done by the Commission.

See also UEMS News 2007/04



## European Commission

### Newly appointed Health Commissioner announces draft directive on health services in June

*The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) recently approved the new European Commissioner for Public Health, Food Safety, Animal Health and Welfare Ms Androula Vassiliou further to the resignation of Markos Kyprianou who left the position to enter the Cyprus government as minister for Foreign Affairs.*

Ms Vassiliou has a sound educational and professional background in Law and some knowledge of European politics thanks to her position of ex-first Lady, her husband G. Vassiliou being President of Cyprus from 1988 to 1993. More interestingly, she chaired for five years the board of trustees of the Cyprus oncology centre before stepping down to take up her new position in Brussels. Her commitment to the oncology centre is



Ms Androula Vassiliou

said to have prepared her in addressing the public health dimension of her new job.

During her auditions in front of MEPs, Commissioner Vassiliou was reported to have made a good impression by her command of the issues at stake. Tellingly, one of her first official speeches was on combating cancer. Other public health priorities also included mental health,

organ donation and citizens' rights in cross-border care. Addressing the European Parliament (EP), Ms Vassiliou announced that the long-awaited draft directive on cross-border care will be released in June. This draft directive should be part of a "social package" prepared with the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs Mr Vladimir Spidla. See also UEMS News 2007/06

*I am sure that nobody is against the principle of improving legal clarity and transparency on an existing right under the treaty, or against the objective of improving patients' access to healthcare*

## The future of the health sector in Europe

*A Hearing on the future of the health sector was organised in the Committee of the Regions (Brussels) on 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. On this occasion, participants highlighted several important challenges.*

One of the main challenges underlined by this hearing was the complex nature of

free movement both for patients and health professionals. As regards the medical profession, while the harmonisation of the quality medical training was positively underlined, the medical brain drain from central and eastern to western European countries was seen as a source of major concern. The un-

derlying question to be addressed in this respect encompassed the attractiveness of medical practice to avoid brain drain but also to attract students in all EU Member States. For patients, the complexity was pointed out in finding ways to allow a genuine freedom of movement while avoiding risks of "health tourism".



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**For any further information on issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the UEMS Secretariat.**

## UEMS - The voice of practising medical specialists in Europe

### EVENTS ANNOUNCEMENT

#### Systems Biology of Cancer - Signaling Networks, Modeling and Clinical Implications

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008 - Rehovot, Israel

More information on <http://www.weizmann.ac.il/conferences/SBC08/>

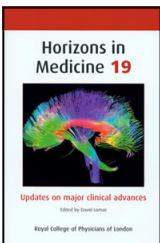
#### Internet of Things - Internet of the Future

6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> October 2008 - Nice, France

This conference -organised as part of the French Presidency of the European Union - will cover topics related to the development of the Internet of Things in the wider context of the international debate on the Internet of the Future and the trends and developments regarding the mobile Internet.

More information on <http://www.internet2008.eu/>

### PUBLICATIONS



#### Horizons in Medicine

Each year the Royal College of Physicians organises a conference aiming at giving an overview of the recent developments in several medical specialties.

On this basis, the RCP elaborates a publication available on command on <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/brochure.aspx?e=243>



#### Climate change

The British Medical Association (BMA) published Health professionals taking action on climate change, a web based resource which calls on health professionals to take a lead in tackling climate change.

For more information visit <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/climatechange>



#### Eurohealth

Eurohealth is a quarterly publication issued by LSE Health (London School of Economics and Political Science) that addresses health policy issues and aims at contributing to a debate on health policy in Europe.

More information and publication on <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEHealth/documents/eurohealth.htm>



#### European agency for safety and health at work

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work released a report Expert forecast on emerging psychosocial risks related to occupational safety and health. This report points out a number of risks which could be impacting workers' health.

To consult this publication: <http://osha.europa.eu/publications/reports/7807118>



#### Journal of CME for health professionals

The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions is the official journal of The Alliance for Continuing Medical Education, the Society for Academic Continuing Medical Education, and the Council on CME, the Association for Hospital Medical Education. It is a quarterly journal publishing articles relevant to theory, practice, and policy development for continuing education in the health sciences.

More information on <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117861850/issuyeargroup?year=2008>