

**VIDEO MESSAGE**

**CONFERENCE: EUROPEAN HEALTH AT THE SERVICE OF PATIENTS, PARIS**

**13 OCTOBER 2008**

**SPEAKING NOTE (VIDEO MESSAGE)**

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sorry that I cannot be with you today at this very important conference focussing on improving healthcare in Europe. This is an issue of great significance to me.

In fact, only 2 weeks ago, I launched a new Commission campaign called Europe for Patients.

This campaign is about clarifying and simplifying our messages. We can achieve this in part, by grouping the different healthcare related initiatives together in a single package. This is the starting point for the Europe for Patients Campaign.

I am also delighted that the Europe for Patients campaign and this conference share so much in common. We both promote the involvement of patients and citizens in policymaking. The first step in this process is raising awareness and providing information.

All across Europe, surveys show that people crave more information on health issues. I feel that we have a responsibility to address this need. We need to provide clear information, free of Euro-jargon, with real examples that relate to people's lives.

This is much more than a communication campaign – I call it a campaign driven by policy.

The central theme that binds the different policies together is the focus on improving healthcare for all in Europe.

This is the headline, but the real work remains in the different health policy initiatives themselves.

At present we have 10 initiatives that we hope to adopt in the coming 6 to 9 months.

These initiatives address crucial issues including cancer screening, patient safety and rare diseases, as well as antibiotic resistance and the health workforce.

We also intend to adopt important quality and safety measures on organ donation and transplantation, accompanied by an action plan to address the organ shortage in Europe and strengthen coordination mechanisms.

This is an ambitious agenda, or "roadmap".

Clearly, we have a busy road ahead.

I know that this conference will be looking in detail at several of these initiatives and I look forward to hearing the results of your discussions.

The Europe for Patients' campaign is about clarity and transparency. It gives our partners a clear and coherent message about our vision and priorities on healthcare related policies.

We need to work together with health organisations at European, national and regional levels to inform patients and citizens in Europe about how EU policies affect their health choices.

We are not only being ambitious, but we are also challenging ourselves. This is a new way of working for all of us.

This campaign promotes one of the key values in the EU health strategy, that of citizens' empowerment.

A new website called "Europe for Patients" will be a step towards achieving this empowerment. This will be available on the EU health portal in 22 languages.

The aim of the website is to become a centre of information.

We will provide regular updates on the Europe for Patients healthcare initiatives.

At the same time, we will invite interested national and regional health organisations to post their health stories and events on the website.

We want to encourage information flow in many different directions at different levels and between different partners.

I want to involve citizens in our health policymaking by bringing initiatives closer to the public.

I would like to congratulate the French Presidency on organising this conference and calling attention to the rights of patients in Europe.

I wish you a constructive and productive meeting.

Thank you.

**End**

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