

Anders' Olauson Speech in the European Parliament, 16 September 2008

Thank you very much Dagmar for your kind introduction. And for your on-going support to the European Patients' Forum ! We value this enormously. I would also like to say a big **thank you** to all of our honoured guests for being here this evening.

Today marks an important milestone for EPF. Today we launch our Patients' Manifesto and call on you, Members of the European Parliament, alongside our health stakeholder allies for your support.

Our current health systems can be unfair, divisive and fail to put the patients' perspective first. We believe all patients within the European Union have a basic right to equal access to quality medical treatment, regardless of where they live, their status or their income.

Through our membership, the European Patients' Forum represents over 150 million patients across the EU.

In our Manifesto we call for new measures in 3 fundamental areas

We call for

- Equal and timely **access** to safe, effective diagnosis, treatments and support ;
- Better **information and resources** for patients to be partners in managing their care;
- A **patients' voice to be heard** in Brussels and throughout the European Union.

We call upon the political groupings within the European Parliament, MEPs, prospective MEPs, national representatives in EU Member States, and the new Commission, to commit to the legitimate rights and needs of patients and to make our proposals their priority. – Your priority!!

OUR PATIENTS' MANIFESTO IS NEEDED NOW

Patients have the right to be fully informed about health issues so they can take responsibility to manage their own health.

However our members say that when they see a health professional there are often enormous and unjustifiable inequities across the EU in terms of the quality of care offered, and the treatment received. The fundamental problems are:

- Lack of equal and timely access to treatment,
- Lack of access to quality information,
- Lack of psychological, social and environment support that help the patient during treatment and recovery. – Patient journey

These shortcomings have a negative effect on the quality of life of a huge number of patients in every Member State, regardless of their disease or condition.

The lead-up to the forthcoming European Parliamentary Elections and new Commission is a time to set new political priorities, and commit to take action.

I am not going to go through every detail of the manifesto but I would like to really underline that it is a comprehensive overview of what needs to change – not a 'magic wish list' dreamt up out of the blue.

I would like for a second come back to the Manifesto's demands

- In relation to equal and timely access to safe, effective diagnosis, treatments and support ;

We want the the current EU political emphasis from purely health and wealth to extended to health, wealth and equity.

While the EU recognises the link between good health and economic prosperity, it also accepts that "health inequities" need to be challenged.

In this way tangible progress can be made.

The new EU Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare should assist these changes; but it needs the universal support from all EU Institutions.

Regarding better information and resources for patients to be partners in managing their care, the Manifesto calls for funds to be provided to help patients acquire the skills to make key decisions about their health. "Health Literacy" as a concept must be established at both EU and national level.

In our Spring Conference on Health Literacy earlier this year, which was opened by the Commissioner Vassilou, we made the following recommendations:

- *The need for further research that explores Health Literacy and its role in healthcare delivery and health outcomes*
- *The importance of setting up an EU level Health Literacy Network*

- *Wider distribution of Health information and Information to Patients that meets core quality criteria*
- *Productive dialogue between patients and healthcare providers to ensure shared decision-making in their care*
- *The meaningful involvement of patients in health literacy policies and programmes.*

We call for funds and political commitment to put these recommendations into action.

Regarding the third key area - a patients' voice to be heard in Brussels and throughout the European Union, our manifesto stresses the need to promote patient empowerment! Patients need to be involved in a formal way in EU and national health projects. With patient input, policy is more likely to respond to our vital needs. – It takes one to know one!!

PATIENTS MUST BE MORE INVOLVED IN HEALTH POLICY

Once a patient is diagnosed we develop a new perspective on life, and a knowledge of how to manage our disease or illness. We also have to navigate our way through health services and systems.

Along the way we form our **own unique perspective** on healthcare developments - it is that perspective, or that voice that we represent. This **informed view** of the patient will enhance health policy, and ensure the treatment offered is patient centred.

Let me stress once again, our Manifesto is based upon reports from our members. The proposals have been developed and endorsed by our members – We believe they are achievable, make economic sense and when implemented will make a significant difference

to the health outcomes and quality of life of vast numbers of patients in every Member State.

An important contribution for a sustainable society!

And this evening, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests we appeal to you to also commit to this change. Sign up to the Manifesto on our website – and work with us towards high quality, patient-centred, equitable healthcare throughout the European Union.