

Brussels, 28 February 2013

Dear Minister of Health,

Informal meeting of ministers of Health 4-5 March: Patients call on the Council to commit to invest in health, people, and tackling health inequalities

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Patients' Forum, on the eve of your informal meeting on 4 and 5 March where you will address the economic crisis and its impact on health.

This has been the core preoccupation for the European Patients' Forum, representing the interests of over 150 million EU patients with chronic diseases, for several years: our member organisations report on the extremely harsh impact of austerity measures that are 'lived' on a daily basis by patients in all parts of the European Union- patients who find it increasingly difficult to access the treatments and the care that we need. Our needs, as patients with long-term conditions, do not diminish or go away simply because of the economic crisis.

How healthcare is prioritised is a litmus test for Europe. Reduced investments in people's health lead to severe costs for society as a whole –in moral, human as well as economic terms.

We call for a fundamental rethink and real commitment to investing in health - investing in progressive and sustainable reform, investing in people and investing in reducing the health inequalities that prevail throughout Europe.

A new holistic model should be put in place where empowered patients are part of the solution to the future sustainability, innovation and quality of health and social systems

Another area of particular concern is the current practice of external reference pricing. We are afraid that it is not doing what was intended, i.e. to facilitate access in low income countries - rather it is exacerbating the access and inequality issues faced by patients. Alternative, more just and coherent approaches need to be explored and we urge you to make this issue central in your discussions.

Yours sincerely,



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