



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH



National
PATIENTS' ORGANIZATION



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First Conference on Health Inequalities in the New EU Member States

Adoption of a Resolution to enhance political commitment

Sofia, 1 October - The adoption of a Resolution by the participants concluded the First Conference on Health Inequalities in the New EU Member States. The document recalls the importance of health inequalities as a main political priority: *"The reduction of health inequalities forms a major pillar of the EU Health Strategy, 'Together for Health' and a major element in achieving the goal of 'inclusive growth' of the Europe 2020 Strategy"*. The Resolution reflects also the will to look at the discrepancies among the EU Members States with regards to access to healthcare and the quality of care, calling for recognition of *"cultural differences in different regions of Europe and its impact on health inequalities"*. In their call for action, the participants urge the EU Members States, in collaboration with the EU Institutions and health stakeholders, to *"recognise the alleviation of health inequalities in the New Members States and Candidate Countries as a political priority at European, national, regional and local levels."* Finally the Resolution paves the way for a wider debate in regard to better access to treatment and encourages interaction and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Entitled *"Policy Makers and Patients – creating the change"*, the conference took place on the 20-21 September 2012 in Sofia, Bulgaria. For the first time a conference addressed the challenge of health inequalities in the Southeastern region from the specific perspective of European and national policy makers as well as patients from the 13 new EU member states, alongside three candidate and acceding countries and seven ministries of health. The event was initiated and organised by the **Bulgarian National Patients' Organization (NPO)** with the collaboration of the **European Patients' Forum (EPF)** and under the patronage of **Mrs. Desislava Atanasova**, Minister of Health of Bulgaria and **Dr. Andrey Kovatchev**, MEP.

Under the initiative of Mrs. Desislava Atanasova, it was decided to organise a meeting in a near future on health inequalities that will convene the Ministers of Health from the new Members States and acceding countries. It will be the occasion to identify and address main challenges such as immigration of highly skilled professionals and utilisation of financial resources. *"The common problems of these countries imply common actions, and this meeting will provide a unique forum for the ministries of health from the region to outline these common actions for overcoming health inequalities"*, pointed out Minister Atanasova.

The issue of health inequalities will also be reiterated at the EU Parliament level by Dr. Andrey Kovatchev. He will present the results that emerge from the First Conference on Health Inequalities at a meeting of MEPs from these countries that will take place in Brussels.

Mr. Charles Price, Representative of DG SANCO, shared the activities of the European Commission to address health inequalities.



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The outcomes and data elaborated at the conference were also discussed at the 7th International Health Summit, "More Consumer Oriented Healthcare - more money for health", on 23-25 September in Prague, Czech Republic.

The conference is a first step taken towards creating and implementing a comprehensive, continuous and economically efficient strategy for tackling health inequalities in the new EU Member States and candidate countries. The Bulgarian National Patients' Organization (NPO) and the European Patients' Forum (EPF) will continue to support the fight against health inequalities with an in-depth survey among patients' organisations to ensure up-to-date and concrete data on the realities for patients. The next edition of this conference is planned to take place in Warsaw, Poland, in 2013 under the responsibility of the Federation of Polish Patients.

The **National Patients' Organization (NPO)** was founded in January 2010 as an association of patient organizations. NPO is registered under the Law for legal entities as a nonprofit organization carrying out activities for the public's benefit. As the largest association of patient NGO organizations in Bulgaria NPO have more than 70 members - 31 full members involved in the most significant diseases and 43 partner organizations in all 28 regional towns of Bulgaria.

www.npo.bg

The **European Patients' Forum (EPF)** was founded in 2003 to become the collective patients' voice at EU level, manifesting the solidarity, power and unity of the EU patients' movement. EPF currently represents 55 member organisations - which are chronic disease specific patient organisations working at European level, and national coalitions of patients organisations. EPF reflects the voice of an estimated 150 million patients affected by various diseases throughout Europe.

EPF's vision for the future is high quality, patient-centred, equitable healthcare throughout the European Union.

www.eu-patient.eu

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