

[GERMAN HOSPITAL FEDERATION - PARLIAMENTARY EVENING]

[KEY-NOTE SPEECH ON HEALTH WORKFORCE AND]

[9 JUNE 2010]

SPEAKING NOTE

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you this evening.

Hospitals are at the forefront of healthcare in Europe. I fully appreciate hospitals' key role and this is why I very much welcome your input and ideas.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few issues of common interest – issues on which the German Hospital Federation is in contact with the Commission.

European citizens have the right to seek safe and good quality healthcare in another EU Member State - and be reimbursed for it. The directive on **patients' rights in cross border healthcare** should help citizens in exercising this right.

I am pleased to confirm that we have reached an agreement on this with Ministers yesterday. This marks a major step towards securing patients' rights.

Cross-border co-operation was also enhanced by the recent adoption by the European Parliament of proposed EU legislation on improving the quality and safety of human **organs** for transplantation.

Every year, transplants save thousands of lives all over Europe. For many patients, transplantation represents the only hope for survival.

The new Directive, which will be officially adopted by the Council later this month, aims to ensure that organs are of the highest level of quality and safety, and that all donations are voluntary and unpaid.

Moving on, I am aware that one of your key concerns is the perceived shortage of health professionals. I have heard there are 4,000 medical vacancies in German hospitals alone!

According to some estimates, in 10 years time there will be a shortage of close to a million healthcare workers in Europe.

We need to find ways to ensure that supply can match the demand for health workers. Will the same skills and training offered today still be relevant in 10 years time? Will the same kind of jobs be available?

The European Commission is currently looking at ways to support national governments to predict which skills will be

required in tomorrow's labour market and how to match needs and skills as part of the EU2020 strategy for growth in Europe.

Another major challenge for the health workforce is ageing; ageing of our population and ageing of the workforce itself. Who will look after us when we are old? Who will be the doctors and nurses of tomorrow?

I am pleased that the future Belgian Presidency will be fostering discussing on this issue through a Ministerial Conference. This conference will follow-up from the policy dialogue, on "investing in Europe's health workforce of tomorrow", in which the German Hospital Federation participated back in April.

You also have a major role to play in tackling the burden placed on the health sector by the ageing population.

15 years from now, the share of people aged over 65 will have increased by 20%. This constitutes more than one fifth of the total European population.

The good news is that ageing shows we have made great progress in the field of health. The bad news is the ageing of the population will place even greater pressure on our health systems.

I believe the solution would require **innovative** ways to make health systems more efficient to be able to meet the needs of the ageing population while keeping costs under control.

Talking about innovative ways, I believe **eHealth** has all the potential to increase the quality and the sustainability of healthcare.

For example, if patients can have their heart rate monitored from home instead of lying in a hospital, they will be receiving better care, with more comfort. At the same time, we will be freeing up the precious time of doctors for more critical uses. Doctors, patients, hospitals, are well placed to advise policy makers on the use of eHealth applications.

Technology, however, needs to be selected and used in the most efficient way possible. It also needs to be interoperable so that communication amongst all systems in Europe is ensured.

This is where co-operation at European level on **Health Technology Assessment** has an important role to play.

This is an area where I believe Member States can have much to gain from sharing methodologies and results.

Pharmaceuticals and medical devices play a key role in delivering innovative healthcare to patients. Within the new Commission, the responsibility for these products falls together with that for the general policy on public health. I am determined to fully exploit the potential synergies. We need to further develop the political and regulatory environment for these products in order to ensure permanent innovation and better availability to patients in all European countries. I promise to always consider the particular situation of hospitals in these initiatives, but I also count on your distinctive responsibility to make sure that innovative healthcare reaches the patients.

eHealth technology, Health technology assessment, medical devices are some of the issues I will be looking at very closely during my mandate.

It is vital that experts, such as yourselves, who know the health sector, help steer us in the right direction.

This is why I appreciate this opportunity to listen to your ideas and concerns.

Thank you.

**End**  
**Word count: 847 words**