

Meeting between HOPE and Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

26 March 2015

Report to Governors

On 26 March 2015, HOPE President Mrs Dr Sara Pupato Ferrari and HOPE Chief Executive Pascal Garel met Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

The meeting started with an introduction of HOPE. HOPE President and CEO presented the history of the federation, current activities and challenges ahead.

They emphasised the diversity in the membership in HOPE, mentioning as well that HOPE has always been at the forefront of enlargement by integrating members long before they join the EU. HOPE was also a leader in initiatives to gather East and West starting in 1990, or more recently raising the brain drain risk in the European Parliament in 2003.

The key messages of the post-election statement were presented.

- Public health should remain the core of EU health-related policies and initiatives.
- Hospital and healthcare services to be fully recognised as major contributors to economic development.
- The coherence of EU policies impacting on health and social care is to be increased.

The methods of work were listed, in particular the HOPE exchange programme as well as the participation in joint actions (Cancer, Organ donation and transplantation, HTA, eHealth) and EU projects (research, public health, continuous education, justice).

A wide range of topics were mentioned, first of all comparative ones: un-necessary care, emergency, out-of-pocket payment, crisis, personalised medicine, ageing workforce and ageing patients, waiting time.

Recent positions were presented as well as other EU issues: the Working Time Directive; Standardisation; mHealth; Data Protection; Medical Devices; Delegated Act on “Safety Features” on medicinal products; Patient safety, and in particular the Joint Action Safety and Quality of Care; Cross-border care and in particular European Reference Networks; Human resources; TTIP.

Finally, the 50th anniversary of HOPE in 2016 was mentioned as well as the 3rd Joint Hospital Conference in November 2015.



The Commissioner recognised the importance of the hospital sector, which he knows very well as he worked in hospitals as a surgeon for 23 years. He recognised that hospitals are also huge players in social activities and their value in this area needs to be acknowledged.

The main points covered by the Commissioner were the following.

- Against raising cuts, the Commissioner stressed that hospitals and healthcare services should not be considered as a mere expenditure, but as an investment. They create added value for economic growth and the society, and represent a huge contributor to jobs creation. Hospital and healthcare services employ a high skilled workforce and are at the forefront in the use of the latest medical and technological innovations. It is not easy to find such a great value in other sectors: indiscriminate cuts are therefore not justified. The Commissioner also stressed the importance of cooperation between different sectors (e.g. Social Affairs, Education) to combine forces.
- Dr Andriukaitis highlighted the importance of promoting a more integrated and systematic approach between different levels of healthcare (i.e. primary care, hospitals). Member States' healthcare systems are very different and complex. The challenge ahead is therefore to identify how this integrated and systematic approach can be implemented in all countries. A more integrated approach is of great benefit for people with chronic diseases. The Commissioner also stressed that European Reference Networks are a priority.
- Reacting to the fact that HOPE mentioned un-necessary care as one of its current focuses, the Commissioner agreed with this priority and stressed some elements to be tackled to avoid unnecessary care: review treatment schemes that are not effective anymore; avoid duplication in laboratory tests and imagery; facilitate the use of generics.
- The Commissioner emphasised the importance of prevention and encouraged HOPE to make this area a priority. Hospitals have an important role to play when it comes to prevention. Huge areas for collaboration are offered by the need to fight against antimicrobial resistance and promote a more responsible use of antibiotics. Finally, the Commissioner also stressed the need to make prevention one of the focus activities within the hospital (e.g. by using more the capacity offered by rehabilitation departments).
- As regards the opportunities made available by eHealth and mHealth solutions, Dr Andriukaitis stressed these represent a great occasion to improve communication and exchange information, not only between different hospitals and relevant stakeholders, but also between Member States' healthcare systems. The Commissioner believes eHealth has the potential to provide also cross-border treatments and said hospitals should be the lead in the development of these solutions.

- The Commissioner also stressed that, given the limited competences of the EU in the area of health, the opportunities offered by the Directive 2011/24/EU on patients' rights in cross-border care should be seized. He said this is an opportunity for the Commission to be more powerful. Another important opportunity is offered by the Joint Procurement Agreement of pandemic vaccines and other medical countermeasures, which enable countries to procure as a group rather than individually, benefiting from advantageous prices and avoiding shortages.