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Mrs Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission
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CC: Paola Testori-Coggi, Director General DG SANCO
Robert Madelin, Director General DG INFSO
Maria Iglesia Gomez, Head of Unit Strategy & International, DG SANCO
Paul Timmers, Head of Unit, ICT addressing Societal Challenges

Brussels, 28 April 2011

Dear Commissioners,

Re: Active and Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership

The European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products (ECHAMP) and EUROCAM (a coalition of patients, practitioners and doctors organisations) were pleased to note the extensive synthesis report of the submissions received to the recent consultation on the above Partnership. The fact that over 500 organisations and individuals have taken the effort to respond to this consultation is a clear indication of both the timeliness and the need for this Partnership as well as of the support by the various stakeholders and target groups involved.

However, having in mind as well the fast growing number of citizens asking for safe and sustainable healthcare, we were disappointed with the report's lack of reference to the important contribution that Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) can play in reaching the overall objectives of the Partnership, despite our submissions to the consultations.

Over a 150 million EU citizens already make use of CAM therapies and products¹. Not only are more and more citizens actively choosing to make use of these therapies; these products are also sustainable from an environmental, economic, safety and public health point of view. In the case of the geriatric population, a recent large scale survey², carried out in the Netherlands, demonstrates that patients whose GP has additional training in homeopathy, acupuncture or anthroposophic medicine have substantially lower health care costs and lower mortality rates. Two recent observational studies conducted in primary care practices in Germany³ showed a beneficial role of homeopathic and anthroposophic medical treatment in the long-term care of older adults.

¹ (source: Charité University, Berlin)

² <http://members.ziggo.nl/peterkooreman/gpcs.pdf>

³ <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2318-10-10.pdf>
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2318-10-48.pdf>

Other studies show that a primary reason for the use of CAM is to maintain health, and, that CAM is particularly helpful in motivating healthy lifestyle change that can increase healthy longevity, prevent chronic illness and provide more friendly and cost effective treatment for it.

Apart from the fact that these outcomes perfectly fit in with the aim of the Partnership it is interesting news for any health insurance company and any government serious about wanting to reduce the soaring healthcare costs while wishing to increase life expectancy. Furthermore, finding alternatives for strong prescription medicines that can have many negative side effects and are often taken in combination as a result of co-morbidity is a priority, especially within the older population.

Adverse drug reactions are common amongst older people and any measure that can be taken to improve this situation and improve patient safety should be supported.

A further contribution of the CAM sector to the future healthcare agenda is the large cohort of CAM health professionals available to healthcare systems to help bring this changed health agenda about.

Apart from their positive impact on the health of individuals, CAM would also have advantages in relation to finances, both for the patients themselves as well as for member states' health budgets. Developing this product and services area should be considered as desirable innovation, which is in line with both health as well as individual requirements.

As underlined in our submissions, individuals are increasingly vocal and determined about being able to make their own informed choices about healthcare. The traditional 'doctor knows best' paradigm is giving way to a more equal relationship where patients and consumers are more actively involved with their own healthcare decisions. Therefore, healthcare systems should increasingly be based on the principle of freedom of choice of healthcare, treatment and therapy with as much focus on maintaining health as on care for illness. As part of this change we consider the integration of complementary and conventional approaches essential.

If the vision on healthy ageing is as follows: "Healthy ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take part in society without discrimination and to enjoy an independent and good quality of life" , CAM can contribute to this vision by:

- 1) Improving health maintenance, health literacy and supporting self-care
- 2) Prevention of illness
- 3) More personally and financially sustainable treatment methods for chronic diseases
- 4) Integration of the services of a large cohort of CAM health workers currently operating outside formal health systems
- 5) Retraining of existing healthcare workers in CAM holistic approaches to prevention and treatment.

ECHAMP and EUROCAM welcome the Active and Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership as a highly useful and appropriate initiative for European citizens. The time is right for a more integrated and holistic approach, a true Partnership involving stakeholders (associations of doctors, practitioners and patients) that choose for a larger – holistic- view on health and disease in line with the WHO definition of Health⁴.

⁴ <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>

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People approaching old age should be at the centre of this dialogue as they are the best placed to indicate what their needs and requirements are.

We therefore urge the Commission and the Partnership's Steering Committee to take account of the positive contribution and innovative potential of CAM in the further development and implementation of this initiative.

With many thanks in advance for your attention,

Yours sincerely,



Nand De Herdt
President ECHAMP

Dr Ton Nicolai
President ECH,
on behalf of CAM
doctors in EUROCAM

Seamus Connolly
President EFCAM,
on behalf of CAM
practitioners in EUROCAM

Enid Segall
President EFHPA
on behalf of CAM
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EUROCAM

Attachment: EUROCAM statement