

Statement to the Proposal for Horizon 2020 [COM(2011) 811 final, 30.11.2011]

Gesundheit Österreich GmbH is the national institute for planning and research concerning the health care system in Austria. We thank for the chance to comment the proposal for Horizon 2020.

Our statement refers to Part III, Societal Challenges, Number 1, Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing. In general we appreciate the wide approach of the EC to support research for sustainable improvements on the upcoming challenges. We agree that health promotion, prevention, determinants of health, self management and health literacy are key factors to meet these challenges and therefore further research in these areas is inevitable.

In addition to the proposal we consider that three specific activities should be pointed out. Two activities relate to the health workforce, one of them to improve individual competencies (1), the other activity to measure the impact of international mobility of health personnel (2). The third activity concentrates on the health system and its organization (3).

1. Improving the quality of future health workforce

The proposal mentions that research should be done on “analyses of future health workforce needs both in terms of numbers and required skills in relation to new patterns of care will be supported” (1.15.) Regarding new reports and papers (Frenk, Chen, Education of Health Professionals for the 21st Century, Report of a Lancet Commission, 2010; Robert Bosch Stiftung, Memorandum Kooperation der Gesundheitsberufe, 2011), health professionals are not yet able to meet the upcoming challenges concerning health literacy, self management, inter- and multi-disciplinary cooperation. As health workforce is a crucial factor for the performance of the health system and the job market, this should be listed as a separate activity. The health care sector provides 10 percent of the EU workforce and approximately 70 percent of the healthcare budgets are allocated to salaries and other charges related to employment of the health workforce [Green Paper “On the European Workforce for Health”, COM(2008) 725 final, 10.12.2008, 3]. The proposal underestimates the necessary efforts on research related to health workforce. This does not accord to the efforts the EC e. g. addresses in the strategy Europe 2020 [Europe 2020, COM(2010) final, 3.3.2010], the Green Paper “On the European Workforce for Health” [COM(2008) 725 final, 10.12.2008], the EU Health Strategy [White Paper “Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008–2013”, COM(2007) 630 final, 23.10.2007].

2. Understanding the impact of international mobility of health personnel

Free movement of persons and services are fundamental rights within the EU. These rights stimulate health personnel to leave their home and work in another country. This highly desired effect might have an impact on the shortage of health personnel in some countries or areas and other consequences. But we do not know yet the consequences. The EU is already aware of the pending global shortage of health personnel (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: "A European Programme for Action to tackle the critical shortage of health workers in developing countries 2007–2013" [COM(2006) 870 final, 21.12.2006]). Referring to the goals of the WHO Global Code (WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, 2010), which is also addressed in the Green Paper "On the European Workforce for Health" [COM(2008) 725 final, 10.12.2008, 11], comprehensive research on the impact of international mobility of health personnel is essential.

3. Reorienting health system and health care organization to meet the future population's needs and to promote self care and health literacy

The EU and the member states are facing challenges concerning health, demographic change and wellbeing. This requires new approaches for the governance of the health system to ensure quality, efficacy and efficiency in the future. We have to prepare the health system and health care organization for integrated care considering collaborating interdisciplinary and interprofessional teams to support personalized and patient-oriented care. To our opinion the proposal should have a focus on the research of governance and therefore we suggest to put this on the research agenda Horizon 2020 as a specific activity.