



Joint press release
Brussels, 1 December 2009

Medicines under the SANCO's competence: An opportunity to put public health first

The *International Society of Drug Bulletins* (ISDB) and the *Medicines in Europe Forum* (MiEF) would like to thank the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, for his decision to transfer the management of pharmaceuticals and medical devices policies from the Directorate General-Enterprise (DG-E) to the DG-SANCO (Health and Consumer Policy).

A long awaited "switch". This was a long-standing request from many civil society stakeholders and the purpose of our previous letter to President Barroso on 13 October 2009. This transfer of competencies is a positive sign of Mr Barroso's willingness to put citizens at the centre of European politics, as expressed in his political guidelines for the new Commission.

As a matter of fact, pharmaceuticals and medical devices cannot be considered as "normal" consumer products. The European Commission's proposals made in December 2008 ("pharmaceutical package") illustrate the unbalanced approach taken by DG-E: pharmaceutical companies' short-term profitability and industrial competitiveness are favoured at the expense of public health. In order to put EU citizens' needs and concerns first, public health should be the main driver for pharmaceutical and medical device policies in Europe.

Priorities to improve public health. If the new Commission is effectively approved by the Parliament in January 2010, MiEF and ISDB expect that the leading role of DG-SANCO will give a new start to the European Commission's approach to health and medicines, putting patients' needs first.

The priority is to reorient the content of the legislative proposals part of the "pharmaceutical package" that puts patients at risk, namely the patient 'information' proposals (aimed to legalise 'direct-to-consumer advertising' (DTCA) for prescription medicines), and some provisions of the pharmacovigilance proposals (premature marketing authorisations becoming the rule, outsourcing the collection and interpretation of pharmacovigilance data to drug companies, a European pharmacovigilance committee (PRAAC) that has no power).

Another priority is the reorganisation of EMEA's funding and functioning, improving its transparency and accountability to the public.

The European Commission will have to demonstrate that the switch from DG-Enterprise to DG-SANCO was not cosmetic but in fact reflects a new ambition for European patients.

International Society of Drug Bulletins

Medicines in Europe Forum



ISDB. International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB), founded in 1986, is a world wide Network of bulletins and journals on drugs and therapeutics that are financially and intellectually independent of pharmaceutical industry. Currently, ISDB has 79 member bulletins in 40 countries around the world. More info: www.isdbweb.org. Contact: press@isdbweb.org.



MiEF. Medicines in Europe Forum (MiEF), launched in March 2002, covers 12 European Member States. It includes more than 70 member organizations representing the four key players on the health field, i.e. users and patients groups, family and consumer bodies, social security systems, and health professionals. Such a grouping is unique in the history of the EU, and it certainly reflects the important stakes and expectations regarding European medicines and medical devices policy. Admittedly, medicines and medical devices are no simple consumer goods, and the Union represents an opportunity for European citizens when it comes to guarantees of efficacy, safety and pricing. Contact: pierrechirac@aol.com.