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Press Release

Investing in Complementary & Alternative Medicine: Innovation and Added Value and saving for European Healthcare

Brussels, 9 October 2012, European Parliament

Brussels – On the 9 October 2012, Members of the European Parliament, health professionals, patients and policy makers gathered in the European Parliament to hear and debate presentations on the innovative added value of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for European Healthcare. The potential that CAM has to maintain health, prevent ill-health promote healthier lifestyles and contribute to the sustainability of health systems should not be disregarded by the European Union at a time when health funding is under so much pressure from economic and demographic pressures, the Conference forcefully concluded.

The event was hosted by MEP Elena Oana Antonescu (EPP, Romania) and co-hosted by MEPs Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP, Finland) and Alojz Peterle (EPP, Slovenia)

Across Europe at least 25% of the population use CAM, currently largely paying for it out of their own pocket . Despite clear citizen use and demand, CAM has not received a proper consideration by the European institutions, despite a call to do so from the European Parliament as far back as 1997.

"We are very grateful to the European Parliament for having hosted this landmark Conference, and to the Commission for having part funded it. The EU faces a serious economic crisis that puts its Member States' healthcare systems at risk and requires them to fundamentally reform. The impact of increased life expectancy, the alarming rise in chronic diseases, growing health inequalities and shortages in health workforces are overstraining health care services in a way unseen before. We believe that investing in a CAM Innovation Partnership will support reforming health systems to focus primarily on prevention and complement conventional care in a way that benefits healthcare systems and people across Europe." Stressed Enid Segall on behalf of EUROCAM, one of the organisers.

"The fact that more and more Europeans live longer requires the adaptation of entire healthcare systems. I believe that complementary and alternative medicine can help promote a healthier and more environmentally aware lifestyle, with significant benefits to personal and societal health. Complementary and alternative medicine has the capacity to change the medical treatment philosophy, by adopting a more holistic outlook on illness and its effects." Echoed Elena Oana Antonescu Member of the European Parliament and co-host of the event

"CAM is reality. Research has shown that millions of patients do use CAM when diagnosed with different diseases. On the other side, we see how different is legal status of it in the Member States which is considered by patients as a kind of discrimination to them. Not much has been done so far at the EU level. I plead for a higher level of attention in this regard and call on

Commission action to start a new initiative, in cooperation with the stakeholders concerned, for the regulations on the licensing and use of CAM medicinal products in Europe and in particular to act upon the suggestions outlined in the Commission Communication 2008, notably that "the suitability of a separate legal framework for products of certain traditions should be assessed. For me, this is a very important element of the closeness to our citizens." Echoed Alojz Peterle Member of the European Parliament and co-host of the event

"There is a growing demand for CAM therapies in Europe. We as the European legislators need to facilitate safe accessibility to these therapies by providing a functioning, legal framework. The next EU Health Strategy needs to set a clear and enhanced role for CAM therapies with a view to European level regulation to be established in the future." Stressed Sirpa Pietikainen, Member of the European Parliament and co-host of the event.

Across Europe there are in the order of 300,000 CAM practitioners and 150,000 medical doctors practising a range of modalities such as acupuncture, aromatherapy, herbal medicine, homeopathy, kinesiology, naturopathy, massage, reflexology, shiatsu TCM etc. They offer a whole person approach to health with a focus on supporting the person's health-maintaining capacities and within which illness is treated according to the distinct diagnostic and treatment methods of the modalities used. This can be on a stand-alone basis and/or in ways complementary to conventional medicine. Currently CAM is mostly provided privately but in a growing number of cases in some countries in collaboration with conventional medical practitioners.

"Up to 80% of citizens in the EU Member States have used complementary and Alternative Medicines in their health care. Their hopes are to get relieve from concerns that the conventional medical services do not meet and to improve general wellbeing. And yet, access to CAM, with rare exceptions is limited to those who can afford to pay for it." Said Helle Johannessen, Professor of Social Studies in Health and Medicine, Institute of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

"Equitable access to healthcare, including CAM, and the sustainability of health services requires a shift towards health promotion and prevention of illness. CAM has the potential to support strategies to increase critical health literacy amongst EU citizens in collaboration with conventional medicine." Echoed Andrew Long, Professor of Health Systems Research, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

The Conference concluded by outlining how CAM can fit into the Health for Growth Programme and the economic and innovation priorities of the European Union. *"The growth potential of the sector, both in terms of GDP, savings on healthcare, healthier citizens, CAM workforce and innovative competitiveness is enormous. For this to happen, we need the EU to give it its due consideration and adequate resources, as well as a framework for professionals to operate in."* concluded Harald Walach, Professor of Research Methodology and Complementary Medicine, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany

► Organisers

EUROCAM, a European stakeholder group, is an alliance of European umbrella organisations of patients, physicians and practitioners working in Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

EPHA is a change agent – Europe’s leading NGO advocating for better health. We are a dynamic member-led organisation, made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.

► Contact Information

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To know more:

- [What is Complementary and Alternative Medicine \(CAM\)?](#)
- [Complementary and Alternative Medicine - an overview.](#)
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs134/en/>
- [Conference’s agenda](#)
- [Speakers’ short biographies](#)

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