



European Public Health Alliance

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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The health of its citizens must be an EU objective !

The Convention Praesidium has published a new draft Constitutional Treaty that is missing the issue that matters most to Europeans - our health.

Despite numerous amendments and statements by members of the Convention, MEPs, Health Commissioner Byrne and the health community, Article I-3 (objectives of the EU) of the new draft Treaty highlights many issues including the single market, sustainable development, environmental protection as well as cultural and linguistic diversity – **but not human health**.

Speaking on behalf of the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), whose membership represents millions of health advocates and professionals, academics, consumer and patient groups, Tamsin Rose, General Secretary of EPHA, pointed out that *“it is ridiculous that the EU can act to protect animal health and welfare but does not have the same powers to protect human health”*.

Good health is a fundamental human right. It should be a priority at European level numerous EU legislation and programmes have a significant impact on human health such as regulation of pharmaceuticals and chemicals, and broad policy areas of social affairs, environment, transport, trade and development.

In December 2002, a wide group of health stakeholders including NGOs, trade unions, patients, industry, healthcare practitioners and managers, social insurance partners called upon the Convention to recognise in the Treaty the critical importance of human health to Europeans.

“This is not about Brussels trying to run national healthcare systems, but about making sure that the EU has a clear duty to ensure that all of its legislation and initiatives make a positive contribution to human health” stated Andrew Hayes, EPHA President. *‘In the absence of a clear public health competence, the emphasis on removing barriers to business in the EU internal market has actually limited the ability of national governments to manage their own healthcare systems’*.

*“Eurobarometer surveys consistently show that in EU policy areas such as trade, agriculture and environment, the number one concern for citizens is the impact on their health. **The Convention’s mandate was to address the gap between the Brussels institutions and citizens’ expectations. By ignoring public health the Convention has failed in its mission**”*, he concluded.

More than 2 million Europeans die annually from cancer and cardiovascular disease, much of it preventable. Other critical issues such as mental ill-health, stress, chronic illnesses and communicable diseases are a huge economic and social burden on Europe. These are not just national problems but need to be addressed effectively across Europe.

EPHA is a platform of 90 NGOs and not-for-profit organisations working on public health issues. Its mission is to improve the health of European citizens and increase their participation in decision-making related to their health. **For more on EPHA’s campaign** <http://www.eph.org/r/29>

Further information can be obtained from,

- **Andrew Hayes, EPHA President, GSM (32) 477 33 66 29**
- **Tamsin Rose, EPHA General Secretary, GSM (+32) 486 76 75 57**

european public health alliance
33 rue de pascale 1040 brussels tel 32 2 230 30 56 fax 32 2 233 38 80
e-mail epha@epha.org Website www.eph.org