



The European Older People's Platform
La Plate-forme européenne des Personnes âgées

07 April 2008

AGE Response to Public Consultation on the EC Legal Proposal on Information to Patients¹

AGE would like to thank the European Commission for the opportunity to comment on the legal proposal on information to patients. AGE represents over 25 million older people in Europe and aims to promote the interests of the 150 million inhabitants aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. Information to patients but especially *to all citizens* is not only crucial but fundamental provided that it is clear, transparent, impartial and given by the relevant health actor: doctors, pharmacists, national health ministries, but not by pharmaceutical companies². As a network representing the largest consumers of prescription drugs, AGE sees a real public health danger as well as a risk of increased public spending, if direct-to-consumer advertisement is deregulated, as proposed in the Commission's consultation document.

In today's globalised world citizens/patients/consumers look at an array sources of information for their medicines including the Internet but accessible and reliable information should continue to come from primary sources such as doctors and/or pharmacists on a face-to-face matter, giving the citizens the opportunity to enquire and clarify his/her doubts. This is real information to patient/consumer/citizens empowerment. Furthermore, information to citizens/patients/consumers should be an added value to the citizen and not result in an overload of information that would confuse, be overlooked by everyone as this would increase the final costs of treatment (including the cost of managing adverse effects) and put an additional burden on national health systems. Information to citizens/patients/consumers should also go hand in hand with a more rational use of medicines³.

AGE feels that the European Commission should propose European rules to harmonise practices on information provision to patients within the European Union

¹ Public Consultation on the EC Legal Proposal on Information to patients¹

Available from:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/pharmaceuticals/pharmacos/docs/doc2008/2008_02/info_to_patients_consult_200802.pdf

² Please refer to civil society (2007) joint response on information to patients: http://www.age-platform.org/EN/IMG/pdf_pdf_joint_statement_finalversion_19092007.pdf

³ Please refer to AGE (2006) position statement on rational use of medicines: http://www.age-platform.org/EN/IMG/pdf_Position_statement_medicines.pdf

and ensure access to reliable and independent information on prescription drugs to all across the EU. In our view information provided by the pharmaceutical companies can never be objective, as one cannot be judge and party at the same time. AGE would like to know how the European Commission is aiming to keep the borderline between information and advertising.

For information to citizens on prescription medicines to be harmonised, it should be approved by a European authority totally independent from the industry and controlled by a thorough mechanism which should enable to retrieve feedback on effect and side effects of medicines from the relevant health actors and patient organisations and make it accessible to all across the European Union. In our view an independent European Information Centre on medicines would bring a real added value.

AGE – the European Older People’s Platform would be very happy to contribute its members views to this debate to help achieve the overarching objectives of the European Public Health strategy of fostering good health *to all* its European citizens especially older people.

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Enc: Joint Open Letter from 11 organisations to members of the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament, especially the Committee Coordinators;

And to Stakeholders:

-Commissioner Vassiliou and Commissioner Verheugen

-Members of the Information to Patients working group of the Pharmaceutical forum

-The Press

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