

HOPE Position on the initiative 'Demographic change in Europe - green paper on ageing'

In the context of demographic change and particularly of ageing, public health, i.e. health promotion and prevention, is a key goal set out in the European treaties. For the past twenty years, the European Health Strategy has been important in defining clear objectives at the European level within this framework.

HOPE believes that there is a genuine added value to pursue this cooperation at EU level. Given the size of the public health challenges European societies are facing, it is crucial for EU action to be focused on those area and on initiatives which add real value.

Public health activities should then remain the core activity at EU level as a lot of work still needs to be done: mental health, environmental health, cancer prevention, antimicrobial resistance, etc. The temptation to enlarge EU action beyond the public health agenda for focus on healthcare issues is a wrong approach, as there is a risk of dispersing efforts and reducing impact where EU action would be most beneficial.

Good achievements have been made in this field by hospitals and healthcare services, in particular in their educational and monitoring role. HOPE has already produced evidence with studies and projects on the field. Through different networks at the European, national, regional and local levels, hospitals and healthcare services, aware of the fact that curative care is not the only way to health, are engaged in activities crossing boundaries for a better integration of care.

Considering the diversity of healthcare systems, cooperation activities are the best tools, as show the European reference networks and the various joint actions: eHealth, cancer, antimicrobial resistance, etc.

At the same time, the coherence of EU policies impacting health and social care is to be increased.

All countries face dramatic increases in the incidence of chronic illnesses, many of which occur later in life. Significant advances in science and technology have helped to alleviate the pain and suffering, although cures for cancer, diabetes, heart disease and respiratory conditions remain a distant goal. These innovations translate into higher health expenditures as an ever-increasing number of people require surgery, or access to medical devices, or are required to take medicines for the rest of their lives. The prognosis is difficult to deny. Demographic shifts over the next few decades could lead to

unprecedented financial issues in society where populations are ageing and succumb more frequently to chronic diseases.

The healthcare sector is aware of this shift and has prepared adaptation.

A key issue at European level is however the clear need for coherence and articulation between the hospital and healthcare sector and the social sector. HOPE believes that there is a particular significance to put this debate at EU level since different initiatives of the Commission are leading to fragmented approaches: hospital and healthcare on one side and social care on the other.

There are serious contradictions in the design of some policies; particularly visible in the debates around mental health, around cross-border care, as well as around services of general interest and in particular social services of general interest.

HOPE urges the EU decision makers to avoid handling those issues separately when the population is ageing and will need better coordination between all social and health activities would be a mistake. It makes no sense to have complex system if they do not answer to the basic needs.

The European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE) is the voice of the hospital and healthcare sector in Europe. It gathers 36 national associations of public and private hospitals and owners of hospitals in 28 Member States of the European Union and two other European countries. It represents around 80% of hospital care in the EU

HOPE, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation, is a European non-profit organisation, created in 1966. HOPE represents national public and private hospitals associations and hospitals owners either federations of local and regional authorities or national health services. Today, HOPE is made up of 36 organisations coming from the 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as from the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Serbia as observer members. HOPE mission is to promote improvements in the health of citizens throughout Europe, high standard of hospital care and to foster efficiency with humanity in the organisation and operation of hospital and healthcare services.