

## **PARLIAMENTARY HEARING NEW HEALTH COMMISSIONER- DESIGNATE JOHN DALLI**

***14 January 2010, 13.00-16.00, European Parliament, Brussels***

On 14 January 2010, Europe's Commissioner-Designate for Health and Consumer Affairs, John Dalli, underwent a public hearing from Members from the European Parliament in his bid to become the successor of Androulla Vassiliou - former European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Affairs.

Overall, Mr Dalli stated that his key priority was the interest of citizens - whether consumers or patients. He said that his aim will be to "empower the citizen" claiming that they "must be informed, so they can decide for themselves what is good or bad for them". He was pragmatic on how to achieve his ambitions but stated his enthusiasm to work closely together with the European Parliament: "I would rather spend time earlier in the legislative process talking about policies with you than to spend time fighting on policies with you at a later stage."

In terms of the health portfolio, Mr Dalli focused on the long term well-being of the European Citizens and patients - aiming to tackle the wider social determinants of health rather than focusing on specific diseases. "We have to address the causes of diseases rather than the diseases their selves. Focusing on a specific disease would be too narrow." Mr Dalli also argued that a broader approach would move Europe closer to its goal to reduce health inequalities.

On the recently rejected cross-border care proposal, Mr Dalli promised to do all the necessary to get the Directive right and acceptable for all member states. As a first intention, he will initiate talks with the current Spanish minister of health to get a common understanding of the proposal and to stimulate action that could be undertaken by the Spanish Council Presidency. MEP Roth-Berendt (S&D) supported him to take up the fight against the member states that are reluctant to have an EU law on cross-border health care, asking, "Will you force them and kick them when this is needed?" Dalli replied, "I will be strong, [...] and it is not something that is going to frighten me".

On the pharmaceutical package - which falls for the first time under the health and consumer portfolio - Dalli mainly focused on the non-controversial parts of the package, including the proposals on counterfeit medicines and pharmacovigilance. On this he stated that counterfeit medicines are "not only a danger to consumers but also to innovation," adding that he will "work hard to make sure that the same controls which apply to the offline world also apply to the online one." "Online counterfeit practices are often related to organised crime and should be combated together with fellow Commissioners in order to ensure the safety of the European patients and consumers". The more controversial part of the package, on information to patients, would have to be reassessed to "bring more patient perspective in the proposal". He promised a reassessment of the draft directive, noting that "there might be a higher demarcation needed between industry and advertisement than stated in the proposal".



### **Next steps**

Following its hearings, the European Parliament is expected to hold a vote of consent on the new Commissioners on 26 January 2010, after which they will be formally appointed. The new Commission will then start to work in February and its term of office will run until November 2014.

John Dalli (born in 1948) has held various high level posts in financial administration and general management in Malta and Brussels prior to working for the Maltese Government for more than 15 years. In 2008, John Dalli became Malta's Minister of health and social policy.

For more information, please contact Annemie Coëme, EHMA Policy Officer,  
([Annemie.coeme@ehma.org](mailto:Annemie.coeme@ehma.org)).