

HAI Europe injects public health perspective into European Research and Innovation Framework

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Last Friday, 20 May 2011, Health Action International (HAI) Europe submitted a response to the European Commission consultation on the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for Research and Innovation, providing feedback and recommendations for health and biomedical research within the next EU research framework. The Commission paper included important references to the societal impact of research and innovation, which was welcomed by HAI Europe. However, in many cases the paper fell short of promoting the public interest in policy-making, and maintained a narrow focus on innovation linked to commercial benefits.

As a patient and consumer organisation, HAI Europe's response sought to inject a citizen-based perspective, in particular for the future of European health and medical research. The response reviewed the Commission's paper from a public health perspective, analysing the conclusions based on how well they rise to the challenge of demographic ageing, a period of severely constrained healthcare budgets, and the sustainability of European healthcare systems. In this context, the omission of health as a societal challenge was disappointing.

"In the EU, and around the world, we are seeing government price cuts and a problem of access to innovative medicines, which is a reflection of the flawed sustainability inherent in the current R&D model," says HAI Europe Projects Officer, Terri Beswick. "The new research and innovation framework marks an opportunity for EU leadership on alternative models of medical research and innovation that promote public health goals; where societal impact means healthy citizens, not just healthy profits."

HAI Europe's response outlined two specific initiatives that should be advanced in the next CSF: Equitable Licensing and Exploration of New Models of Innovation (in particular, innovation inducement prizes).

'Public funds for public good' is the overarching principle behind equitable licensing. Several equitable licensing provisions are directly applicable to the EU research context and goals. In particular, award criteria that ensure access to outputs and knowledge as a fair and reasonable return for the investment of public funds collected from European tax-payers.

The response also called for exploration of new models of innovation in the next CSF, in the form of pilot programmes for inducement prizes, or feasibility studies for alternative models. This is in line with the EU's own commitments to explore R&D funding with incentives that dissociate the cost of R&D from the price of products, thereby promoting access and research collaboration that is currently thwarted by increasing IP protectionism.

HAI hopes that the results of the consultation, which are due to be presented at an EU Commission event on 10 June 2011, take account of public interest perspectives, and demonstrate a shift towards health and medical research and innovation that seeks to bring about positive and valuable health impacts to European societies.

The full consultation response is available at: <http://haieurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/20-May-2011-Consultation-Response-DG-Research-Green-Paper.pdf>

For more information please contact:

Terri Beswick: terri@haieurope.org or Sophie Bloemen: sophie@haieurope.org



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Overtoom 60/II
1054 HK Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 20 683 3684
Fax: +31 20 685 5002

info@haieurope.org
www.haieurope.org