

Fit for Work Europe SUMMIT

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Speech of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania

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Lithuanian Presidency health policy priorities (*revised*)



Dear President, Members of Parliament, dear colleagues,

I would like to congratulate this very important summit we will have today on the investing in health and better management of chronic diseases.

Let me start saying that the agenda of the Lithuanian Presidency includes four main topics:

- drafting and adopting Council conclusions on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems;*
- agreement with the European Parliament on the review of the Tobacco Products Directive, very important for youth smoking prevention and for the prevention of chronic diseases in the future;*
- agreement with the European Parliament regarding Regulation on Clinical trials on medicinal products for human use which could help more effectively implement innovations in chronic disease treatment;*
- maximal progress concerning two legislative proposals in the field of medical devices: regarding Regulation on Medical Devices and Regulation on in vitro diagnostic medical devices.*

I would also like to mention the ongoing reflection process on non communicable chronic diseases which is close to the end and will be finalized in 2014 by organizing summit on chronic diseases. Currently the report prepared by the Commission is debated by High level working group of the Council. The contribution of this summit could be useful for further discussions on this important subject.

As you know the health systems today are facing many challenges such as ageing of population, increasing burden of chronic diseases, new technologies and patient expectations are not always compatible with the budgetary constraints and sometimes are not affordable. I would like to stress that health systems should be understood as widely as possible including social, economic, political, cultural and other dimensions and this is becoming new area of EU policy as well. In all their diversities European Union countries and the entire Europe share a common goal to meet health needs of their citizens. Today the existing scientific evidence tells us clearly that health



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sector alone is simply not able to cope with the challenges in addressing this goal if the entire structure of the contemporary society and other sectors are not actively contributing to the process. This is especially important in the context of growing burden of chronic diseases where involvement of labour, social and other sectors is the only way forward.

During the Informal Council in July in Vilnius, Ministers of health agreed that in order to create modern, accessible and sustainable health systems countries have to ensure fair and cost-effective distribution of money and efficient use of public resources. Member States also support investments in reducing health inequalities because it contributes to social cohesion and breaks the vicious spiral of poor health contributing to, and resulting from, poverty and exclusion. Moreover, Member States highlighted the importance of the cooperation between each other by sharing best practices and the implementation of principle Health in all policies at national and EU levels. All of us know how important social determinants are in Europe at the Europeans need more solidarity. Of course, health should be seen as the resource and investment and not only as expenditure.

This means that only an appropriate level of population health could contribute to better productivity and the increasing of overall competitiveness of European Union and its Member States. This also means that we should find proper ways to prevent and manage chronic conditions and their risk factors such as tobacco smoking in order to keep population healthier and reduce economic burden of those diseases. It is crucial to implement the principle Health in All policies and seek closer intersectoral cooperation at the EU, national, regional and local levels.

I would also like to stress the importance of solidarity and universal coverage in today's Europe. Early detection and effective intervention in prevention of chronic diseases is impossible without intersectoral action plan, solidarity and universal coverage. These principles are very important in the light of Europe 2020 strategy as well as looking from wider social inclusion prospective. This is also the part of EU competitiveness as only proper social integration of everyone could assure the economic prosperity. We should look for integrated care models and patient-centered care as the background for future health systems and your summit could bring certain suggestions and ideas on how we could empower patients to manage their diseases better in order to stay longer at work and be fully engaged in social life.

Of course, Lithuania faces the same challenges like other EU countries. Early diagnosis, intervention and adequate rehabilitation are necessary in order to reduce the burden of chronic rheumatic and musculoskeletal disorders in the right way. We are still working on creation of integrated care model which would connect health care, specialist treatment and rehabilitation divisions in one chain. This is not easy and we continue to work on it.

I hope that the discussions during this conference will contribute to the EU Health Ministers Council conclusions on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems and to finding the ways on how to deal with chronic diseases and other challenges mentioned. I would like to wish you fruitful discussions and creative initiatives for better health of all Europeans.



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For details about the *Fit for Work Europe Summit* and the mission of the initiative visit **www.fitforworkeurope.eu**

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