

7th European Health Forum Gastein 2004

"Global challenges for health -
European approaches and responses"



Pharmaceutical research moves to the USA

EU is not a fertile soil for innovations

Parallel Forum

"Medicine in expanded Europe"

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400.000 pharmaceutical scientists from Europe research at American pharmaceutical companies. However, they do not intend to come back to Europe – European health experts discuss the reasons at the European Health Forum in Bad Hofgastein today.

"The pharmaceutical industry is one of the most important in the European Union", explains Paul Weissenberg of the European Commission in the discussion on medicine policies in expanded Europe, "Pharmaceutical companies are able to guarantee expansion and employment."

Companies move to America

However, the European pharmaceutical industry is presently in an unhealthy condition: "There is erosion towards America", says Weissenberg, "The research centres of pharmaceutical companies accumulate on the East Coast of the USA." According to Brian Ager, Director General of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, three reasons for this development can be listed: The countless different regulations, the lack of a shared market and the absent financial support for research and innovation. "Yet, innovations are the key to success in the pharmaceutical industry." Besides, the EU offers too low funds for education and training.

G10-report to improve situation

Imre Holló, State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Health, identifies the dilemma of health policies with the need to reconcile many interests: "On the one hand, patients should receive efficient, safe and high-quality medicines that are not too costly; on the other hand the domestic pharmaceutical industry should be strengthened." For Holló a remarkable step to improve the situation is the G10-report presented to the European Commission by the working team "Innovation and provision of medicine" (G10-medicine group). The report comprises of 14 recommendations, for instance for improved laws in the member states, in order to maintain national competences and free competition for medicines not refunded by national health insurances.

Only 0.3 percent of new medicaments bring therapeutic improvement

In his home country Hungary, costs for medicine already swallow more than a third of the national health expenses. "It is evident that the young democracies have too less experience in negotiating with pharmaceutical companies, and the many recently developed products are accordingly more expensive", states Holló. In order to reduce health expanses and to allow entry into the Euro-zone, the Hungarian government enacted a compulsory regulation for the medicine sector: the aim is to regulate and influence the provision and demand. To charge compensation from the patients to increase competitiveness of European pharmaceutical companies is only one possibility for Holló: "The support of truly innovative medicine would be of much higher importance." An EU-wide survey revealed that out of the 2693 medicines licensed in the EU only 0.3 percent have brought therapeutic improvement in the last 22 years."

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