



## **New Member States Lag Behind In Applying For EU Structural Funds In Healthcare**

- **Only a few months left to submit applications for EU funding**
- **Healthcare infrastructure is a vital element in economic growth and job creation in the Central and Eastern European countries**

Healthcare infrastructure is an important way to accelerate the cohesion between old and new Europe. However, investment in healthcare is sometimes put behind other infrastructure measures like transport and energy. “It is a fundamental misunderstanding if policymakers think that they have to decide between investing in health or in wealth”, says Karl-Jürgen Schmitt, Chairman of the Structural Funds Taskforce in COCIR, the European trade association for the radiological, electromedical and healthcare IT industry.

At the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), where COCIR sponsored a session on “Improving Healthcare Infrastructure”, experts urged new EU Member States to pay greater attention to the role of healthcare infrastructure. Health and wealth are interdependent as healthy people contribute to economic growth, they concluded. Healthcare creates jobs and in the EU approximately 10% of jobs are in this sector, the COCIR experts stressed.

“The window of opportunity for Member States to apply for Structural Funds is closing soon. The time to act is now” said Frank Anton, COCIR Chairman. Member States have until February 2007 to submit their applications for Structural Funds.

“Healthcare infrastructure plays a comparable role to other forms of infrastructure. It contributes to society in many different positive ways” said Karl-Jürgen Schmitt. “Structural Funds can boost the quality of healthcare, create jobs and improve the standard of living for citizens in the respective countries.”

“It becomes more and more evident that healthcare and its infrastructure play a dynamic role in meeting the goals of the Lisbon agenda. In addition, healthcare infrastructure is very important to European citizens and has a long-term perspective in improving the future of the European Union” said Peter Ungar, DG Regio, European Commission.

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COCIR: [www.cocir.org](http://www.cocir.org)

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