

## **2<sup>nd</sup> South Eastern Europe Conference on Health Service Management**

Dear Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to participate in today's opening of the conference on Health Service Management. The European Union is providing support to Serbia in this area through the 5 million euro project "Training in Health Service Management". This project will help modernize and improve the Serbian health system through training and capacity development. It is also our largest project in the health sector so far.

This particular project is supporting professional training in health management at master's level and targeted short term training for health staff. The Serbian health management education programme is aimed at improving the overall effectiveness of the health system in Serbia. The Master's course and the other training we provide in the area of health management will help boost organisational, managerial, financial and administrative knowledge and skills.

In our regular annual report published only two weeks ago, the European Commission noted that administrative capacity, including managerial skills, as well as funding in the public health sector are not sufficiently developed. Administrative capacity within the Public Health Institute is also limited. Moreover, a public health strategy and a law on public health still need to be adopted. It is precisely for these reasons that we are continuing to support the reform drive in the Serbian health sector with financial assistance, but also through the provision of expertise which should help the Serbian health care system to come closer to standards we are used to in the European Union.

Looking at what has been done so far, from the year 2000 to date, the European Union has provided substantial support to the health system in Serbia in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health. We have successfully implemented projects for a total budget of 110 million Euros. This assistance has been developed over three major phases:

- emergency provision of medicines and equipment in the early days;
- capacity building to the key institutions;
- support to the overall reform process.

Some of the reforms have already produced concrete results. For example, we note that there has been progress in the on-going reform of the health insurance system. The implementation of the law on health insurance has continued.

The authorities have launched awareness-raising campaigns on health prevention directed at the general public and aimed at improving communication between health professionals and patients. The EU has been strongly supporting these efforts and we are also seeing good initial results.

In addition, in the health sector, as in other fields, we have been instrumental in facilitation that international financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank, lend large sums for investment, particularly in renewing infrastructure. In the health sector, this amounted to 50 million euros for the refurbishment of 20 major hospitals throughout Serbia in period 2003 to 2007 and another 200 million euros for the modernisation and restructuring of the 4 University Clinical Centres from 2008 to 2012.

These are some examples of how the EU is supporting Serbia to align its health system with EU standards. Serbia should pave the way to a modern and efficient healthcare system that is more oriented to increasing patient satisfaction and to improving service delivery and this will be achieved only if all key stakeholders work together effectively towards this objective. This will also show the ordinary citizens that the European integration process contributes primarily to improve their daily life.

I wish you a successful conference and thank you for your attention.