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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Report on Action Day “Our Health is nor for Sale” February 7th 2014.</b> and Press Release of the European Network against the privatization and the Marketization of Health and Social Protection” and the “Platform for Action on Health and Solidarity”		
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Short report of the meeting organized the “European Network against the privatization and the Marketization of Health and Social Protection” and the “Platform for Action on Health and Solidarity” in Brussels on Thursday February 7th 2014.

First I attended a Press Conference as I was too early for the Conference on itself and it was a short version of what would follow.

I was not aware that there was a Press Conference and as I saw the logo of the meeting and people attending something I joined...

I think there was some press present.

Before this, in the morning, the group went to some embassies or Permanent Representations to the EU of some EU Countries in Brussels as well as to some Commissioners (Internal Market, Social Affairs and SanCo) to hand over the “Manifest of the European network against privatization and commercialization of health and social protection”.

Then the real conference started with an introduction by the Belgian Trade Union representative (CNE-LBC, Centrale Nationale de Employés, Landelijke Bediende Centrale).

This was followed by some examples from countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, France, Belgium, Poland and Germany.

It is allarming to notice that the social context is dramatic in countries such as Spain and Greece, where for instance the unemployment of women for instances reaches about 60 %; especially in the young age group.

This is an important Social Determinant for Health and shows that there is a gap between the Troica which is only considering the reimbursement of the depts while if Health care was working well it could also create jobs and solve many problems.

In Portugal it appears that many (about 20 %) of health care workers are leaving the country and are working mostly in Europe but also in the US and other countries.

One of the problems linked to this is that the Portuguese State was paying the costs for training those people and now they are working elsewhere...

In Germany, it appears that some hospitals or health care centers are bought by some bit commercial companies such as for instance Fresenius.

We have in Belgium something similar as medical laboratories are getting larger and larger and now are in the hands of large commercial companies for instance from Australia, Germany or France.

In Poland, they are reorganizing the health care system but by doing so they are introducing private companies and closing more and more facilities.

In many countries there was in the past universal coverage for Health and the services were free of charge while now all of a sudden, people have to pay out of the pocket part of the Health care or have to be insured which excludes some parts of the society such as for instance the migrants and the poor people.

Where I had personally a problem with is that there was a kind of “diabolisation” of the “private” network and glory for the “public” sector while in my view, in Belgium at least, all hospitals, private as well as public, are looking for making money.

So, in a way, it should be better to look for “non for profit” and “for profit” organisations.

Another thing is that there was mentioned many times that there was no Commissioner for Health and at the end of the meeting, when it was said many times, I tried to intervene and clarify the issue but did not get the chance to say it.

The last intervention was by Mathias Maucher who is the Health and Social Services responsible for EPSU, the European Trade Union for Public Services.

He was giving a clear overview on the Manifesto and what was mentioned in that document.

As such the Manifesto is a good working document but it is much too long for politicians... No one of them will ever read a 28 pages long document... They should also produce a very short (one page) synopsis of the Manifesto with only some important bulletpoints.

One of the presentations was from a group from the United Kingdom “Keep our NHS public” that explained that there were some more or less secret negotiations between the US Department of Commerce and the EU Commission about an agreement on larger exchange of services and harmonization, the so-called “Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership” or TTIP.

It seems that this would go rather in the lowering of the criteria as in many issues the European regulations are stricter than the American ones and there is a fear in the UK that some Health care services could be provided by US companies.

There was some time for discussion at the end and first I did not want to appear as the “teacher” who was telling them that there is a EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection but that due to the Subsidiarity Principle, his remit was somewhat smaller than the other Commissioners.

As some people were speaking rather to hear themselves speak I decided to raise my hand but then the chairman told that due to time constraints and the fact that the translators were going to stop translating, it was not possible any more to intervene.

As I could not intervene I talked to the ladies of “Keep our NHS public”, explaining them that based on the Subsidiarity principle, one of the basic principles embedded in the EU treaties, health care is not an issue for Europe and only National authorities can determine how health care services are provided in each Member State.

The ladies were not aware of this Subsidiarity issue and were afraid that the UK government would take this agreement as given but this would NOT be under European pressure.

I am nearly sure that as the agreement would be finalized, the EU Commission will have to withdraw all the aspects including Health care issues from this Trade Agreement with the US authorities as they have to realize that Subsidiarity will make those parts not valid.

I also went to the main organizer telling him that there was a mistake that I wanted to clarify.

B. Maillet, representing Enrico Reginato, FEMS President at the event.



## Press Release

*“European Network against the Commercialisation and Privatisation of Health, Social Work and Social Security”*

Brussels, 8 February 2014



## A European Campaign for the Defence of Health and Social Security from 8 February to 25 May

On 7–8 February in Brussels, a coordinated European campaign was launched that will run until the European elections on 25 May 2014.

At 9.30 on the morning of 7 February, a new Manifesto was released. Delegations from across Europe had already submitted it to the Belgian Prime Minister. Eleven European ambassadors were given the Manifesto at the same time, and asked to pass it on to their respective governments.

The delegations then met in front of UNESCO’s headquarters in Brussels where a demand was made for egalitarian health care and social security, available to all, to be recognised as part of the common heritage of humanity. UNESCO has acknowledged this demand with an email.

The demonstration then made its way to the seat of the European Commission, where our delegation made up of representatives from eight countries .... submitted the Manifesto. There, we requested a response to our analyses and demands from commissioners Barnier, Andor and Borg.

The afternoon of 7 February and the morning of the following day saw these initiatives consolidated during the Sixth European Conference of associations, unions and civil society groups in defence of health, social work and social security. This conference has allowed us to deepen our understanding of, and elaborate alternatives to, liberal policies through evidence and statistical analysis from a dozen European countries: Portugal, Greece, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Poland, Belgium, France, Germany the Netherlands, Ireland and Slovenia.

This conference of the European Network against the Commercialisation and Privatisation of Health, Social Work and Social Security ended with an appeal. We invited citizens, associations, unions, political parties, and national and regional joint initiatives defending healthcare to stage a week of action from 2 to 8 April, with the key moment on 7 April: World Health Day. Activities will be planned separately in each country, and in some cases, each region – as in the Spanish case.

### **The Network has asked that across the period 8 February to 25 May 2014:**

- the analysis and claims made in the Manifesto be circulated and debated as widely as possible. To this effect a shorter document, illustrated by chosen testimonies and arguments, will be published.
- that all professionals and staff working in health care, who suffer heavily from the commercialisation and the privatisation of health, be addressed directly.
- the international dimension of this campaign be made clear throughout the activities planned by joint initiatives, notably on 8 March (International Women’s Day), and 1 May 2014.
- candidates for the European Elections be questioned vigorously about the issues in the Manifesto, notably during meetings where they have been invited to respond specifically to it.
- the construction of a EU-US transatlantic agreement be opposed because of the particular threat it poses to health, social work and social security.
- the Network expand into as many countries as possible, and draw in the maximum number of associations, unions and parties opposed to privatisation and supporting the mobilisation of the public.

We must all learn from the victories of the Spanish ‘White Tide’ (*mareja blanca*) which defeated plans to privatise six hospitals in Madrid, united around the watchwords: ‘Health isn’t for sale! Health defends itself’ (*la sanidad no se vende se defiende*). Victory is possible in the face of the rapacious appetites of multinationals, pharmaceuticals companies and health insurances giants if we all fight together.

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