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Personal Health Systems on EU Agenda, Brussels

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How best to harness the potential of technology supporting personalised care was discussed at the **Personal Health Systems 2007 Conference**, organised by the European Commission on 12-13 February in the European Parliament in Brussels. The event looked at deployment opportunities and research challenges in the presence of policy-makers and industry, aiming to stimulate market development and support Member States and regions in deploying eHealth systems and services that enable better care for people in an ageing society.

Gérard Comyn, Head of the ICT for the Health Unit within the Directorate- General for Information Society at the European Commission, was pleased to comment on the benefits of PHS:

“Personal Health Systems (PHS) encourage independent lifestyle choices, enable early diagnosis of diseases and facilitate the provision of personalised care at the point of need, particularly for the remote management of chronic diseases. These systems can empower citizens to actively participate in disease prevention, treatment follow-up and enjoy a more interactive relationship with healthcare providers.”

ICTs have proven to be a powerful tool to improve quality of healthcare for all European citizens, at affordable prices, at a time when healthcare expenditure in Europe is already significant (8.5% of the Gross Domestic Product on average) and rising faster than economic growth itself. PHS can create opportunities for everybody – whatever their age – to receive the best possible healthcare available.

More than 300 experts representing global industries, health providers and authorities participated in focus sessions and round table discussions on potential synergies between information and communications technologies (ICTs) and Personal Health Systems (PHS). A technology showcase, including live 3-D audiovisual prototypes and technical demonstrations, showed how easy-to-use wearables and portable devices could make a real difference to monitoring of health conditions.

The two-day conference focused on ongoing research opportunities and technology developments in Personal Health Systems such as wearable and portable health monitoring systems and ICT-supported personalised services for extended healthcare, including home care. Participants discussed new challenges that will shape the future of the healthcare industry, such as:

- _ Interoperability between homecare and clinical settings
- _ The ageing society: organisational, financing and policy issues
- _ Ambient Assisted Living Programmes
- _ Market developments and industry commitments in the PHS area
- _ The contributions of micro-nano systems towards personalised health care

Fabio Colasanti, Director-General of the Information Society and Media Directorate-General (DG INFSO) of the European Commission, welcomed participants to the conference. Dr Roberto Ferrari, President-Elect of the European Society of Cardiology, gave a keynote speech on “The impact of Personal Health Systems on Cardiovascular Diseases” and Yves Masson, Chairman and CEO of AXA Assistance on “The role of technology in the development of health assistance services”.

Finally, the conference provided information and a networking opportunity for those interested in the upcoming Call 1 of the 7th Framework Programme, which will focus on a new generation of Personal Health Systems.

_ For news and video-web streaming of the conference, see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/ehealth

_ For further information, e-mail: info-phs2007@ec.europa.eu.

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