

The European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy



November 21, 2006

The Honorable
Dr. Michael Weninger
European Policy Advisor on
Dialogue with Religions, Churches and Humanism of the
European Union

Your Honour,

Pleased allow me to thank you for the time you took to meet with representatives of the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC) and me. Your gracious and genuine concern for our work is very encouraging for us all.

The “Dialogue Seminar” was very beneficial. It gave us all a chance to better understand the position of the European Commission on how the social services offered by Churches are incorporated within the political and legal framework of the European Union. If such a dialogue takes place again, it would be beneficial if more time could be allotted for more exchange of concerns.

It is important to note that the contribution offered by Churches in social services and health care area cannot be limited to fiscal support and the construction and operation of institutions. The main contribution which is offered is that of spiritual care. In the debriefing session after the “Dialogue Seminar”, all agreed that the chaplain is in the “front line” within health care institutions, in providing this spiritual care. *The chaplain is the visible link that brings together the dynamics of healing and faith within health care settings.* Thus, we, as chaplains, are very much aware of all the dynamics that religion plays in health care institutions and in the health of each patient. That is why the role of the spiritual health care provider (the chaplain) is so important, a role that must be safeguarded.

It is necessary to reiterate that chaplaincy (spiritual health care) is being put to jeopardy in many health care institutions. One example of this is in the UK where it has been ruled that chaplains are not part of the therapeutic team and, as such, are not allowed to have access to information about patients and their religious affiliation without their explicit consent. Some chaplains are not allowed to have a list of patients in the hospital (which they have been used to having). In other situations, religious dress is not allowed within the hospitals. I am sure that you agree that these developments are very disturbing and hinder the spiritual care that is most needed toward a holistic view of healing.

Lastly, I would like to inform you that in our meeting with Mr. Schinas, Chef of the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, we agreed to work closely together toward a meeting concerning palliative care. This meeting will be a first step in reviewing how the European Commission can address the concerns of this area of care. I will keep you informed of the developments of this effort, hoping that you will assist us in any way possible.

Again, on behalf of all the participants of the ENHCC, I thank you for all that you are doing within the European Union in providing the open channels for dialogue and cooperation.

With great respect,

Rev. Dr. Stavros Kofinas
Coordinator of the European Network of Healthcare Chaplaincy
(Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Email: coordinator@eurochaplains.org

Address:
Lycias 3
171 24 Nea Smyrni,
Greece

Phone: +30-6944 57 3625 Fax: +30 – 210 93 74 217

Website: www.eurochaplains.org

Cc:

1) Mr. Margaritas Schinas,
Chef of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection,
Markos Kyprianou, European Commission

2) To all the participants of the ENHCC