



## **European Parliament Interest Group on Complementary and Alternative medicine (CAM)**

### **Summary of the meeting 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

**European Parliament has a role in supporting the integration of CAM research into the new EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme – Horizon 2020 (2013 -2020).**

*The need for research into health promotion and CAM* (Complementary and Alternative Medicine) was the title of the third meeting of the MEP CAM Interest Group of the European Parliament held on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in the Parliament. The meeting was chaired by MEP *Sirpa Pietikäinen*, PEP Fin. The meeting participants first listened to a presentation entitled ‘CAM and the Research Framework Programmes’ given by Mr. Ole Olesen, Senior Scientific Officer, Infectious Diseases & Public Health unit, DG Research and Innovation. This was followed by a presentation on *The Contribution of Complementary Medicine to European Public Health – Towards a Research Agenda* by Prof Dr Harald Walach, of the European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder, Germany.

After a brief introduction to DG Research and the structure and content of the health theme in the current EU FP7 research framework programme, Mr Olesen referred to two current research projects in CAM (*CAMBrella and TCM*) funded under FP7 that take up most of 5.5 million euros currently invested in CAM research. He then presented the change in thinking within DG Research that will underpin the new research framework programme FP8 or ‘*Horizon 2020*’, 2013-2020. The switch is to a broader common strategic framework that includes common strategies with a focus on ‘societal challenges’. Among the societal challenges identified is ‘*Health, demographic change and wellbeing*’ - how to provide better health while maintaining an economically sustainable healthcare system. Under this challenge three main areas of activity were outlined, prevention, treatment and healthcare sustainability, all of which CAM has the potential to contribute to. In conclusion he stated that he thought *Horizon 2020* may aim at a broader, more holistic approach to health, including additional focus on well-being. but that, as always, research activities selected for funding are selected on competitive basis of scientific excellence, impact and implementation.

In describing the added value of CAM as a patient oriented multi therapeutic approach to treatment and health, Prof. Walach outlined the advantages of CAM as well as the problems and obstacles which confront CAM in receiving sufficient support for much needed research. Mainstream orientation and predominance in classical pharmacological research as well as very little industry support and marginal support, mostly from small charitable sources, prohibit adequate large scale research in CAM in Europe. International comparisons reveal that WHO has declared CAM and traditional medicines important elements in healthcare worldwide and also demonstrate that considerable funds are dedicated to CAM research in other countries (e.g. USA \$128 million for 2011). As a way forward, Prof. Walach strongly recommended the provision for funding for CAM research be included in the health research strategic framework of *Horizon 2020*. He argued in favour of a ring-fenced approach focusing

on model validity and European consortia, asked for specific and knowledgeable reviewers to be included in evaluation panels and recommended as a strategy following the recommendations of the roadmap that will be outlined by the *CAMbrella* project towards the end of 2012.

In the ensuing discussion on the objectives of *Horizon 2020*, the potentially new and open as well as holistic approach of the programme was underlined. In principle it would seem to offer CAM much better research opportunities than before. It was agreed that CAM has to be seen as an important ‘innovation factor’ in *Horizon 2020*. However, the selection criteria for projects, the traditional orientation of conventional reviewers and the role of the Programme Committee (national governments) in setting the priorities for the Framework - and for the Annual Work - Programmes are still existing barriers for CAM research at EU level. Members of the CAM Interest Group agreed that the European Parliament has an important role to play in introducing and safeguarding the opportunities for CAM research in the new research programme during its forthcoming discussion in Parliament and that these issues must be taken up accordingly.

NOTE: The EP CAM Interest Group is a voluntary group of MEPs who follow and support the interests of CAM in the policy proceedings of the European Parliament. The Group regularly organizes open meetings in the Parliament 2 – 3 times per year. The secretarial support for the group is provided by EUROCAM, the multi-stakeholder group for CAM in Europe.