



of the insurance against accidents
at work and occupational diseases

Declaration of the EUROPEAN FORUM of the Insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases concerning the EC consultation processes on social services of general interest and health services

Lucerne, 28 June 2007

The EUROPEAN FORUM of the insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases represents 20 institutions responsible for statutory accident insurance in 16 countries in Europe. Their common goal is to promote and safeguard the principles of social accident insurance and to serve as focal point for statutory accident insurance matters in Europe and abroad.

Central concern of the EUROPEAN FORUM is to enhance the welfare of the insured and working people in Europe. It aims in particular at the preservation and the development of the elements indispensable to the effective protection of people in their work in view of occupational risks including prevention rehabilitation and compensation (and their characteristics).

In this context a main objective of the EUROPEAN FORUM is to contribute the knowledge and experience of institutions for insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases to the process of convergence on the way to the formation of a European social union and to inform and advise the institutions and executive bodies of the European Union. Although the process of convergence in Europe at present only affects accident insurance systems in EU member states, central organisations of institutions for insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases in all European countries are permitted to participate in the EUROPEAN FORUM.

The EUROPEAN FORUM methods are knowledge transfer through surveys and studies as well as the identification and the exchange of good practices. The statutory accident insurance institutions deem it important to underline that their work is driven by the same spirit of solidarity and based on ethical, social and legal obligations that also characterize an integral part of social security in Europe.

1. Diversity is a characteristic feature of accident insurances in Europe

The EUROPEAN FORUM institutions know from experience and therefore underline that legal and organisational diversity and the joint pursuit of commonly shared goals (in particular effective protection of people against occupational risks including, rehabilitation and compensation) go well hand in hand. Therefore, the EUROPEAN FORUM of accident insurances points out the principle of subsidiarity as laid down in Article 137 of the EC treaty as basic principle for social security in Europe.

2. Current level of supra-national regulation is sufficient

Accidents at work and occupational diseases are part of the coordination of social security schemes in Europe in order to protect social security rights of persons moving within the European Union. In this context the EUROPEAN FORUM institutions emphasize that EC-regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 as well as 883/04 provide a comprehensive and

sufficient legal basis with respect to the insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases. However, the EUROPEAN FORUM observes with interest recent EC initiatives and developments concerning the free movement of services, especially the consultation processes on social services of general interest and health services, which affect genuine statutory accident insurance interests.

3. Social accident insurances provide non-economic social services of general interest

The statutory accident insurance institutions welcome that the European commission acknowledges the specific characteristics of social and health services, distinguishing them from other services (such as postal or telecommunication-services) and point to the fact that accident insurance as integral part of social insurance is a prerequisite for warranting social rights and social cohesion on a base of solidarity.

The signatory bodies declare that the social security activities they perform fall in the category of non-economic social services of general interest and request that these activities always be clearly understood and handled as non-economic at Community level.

The EUROPEAN FORUM acknowledges that the differentiation of social services of general interest and health services may be difficult, in particular in the field of statutory accident insurance schemes where both services are provided.

The EUROPEAN FORUM points out the specialities and particularities applicable within the sector of accidents at work and occupational diseases (e.g. specially managed medical rehabilitation of injured workers). Such particularities and other genuine features of accident insurance have to be recognized and treated as such within the current EC initiatives.

4. Call for dialogue

In light of the ongoing activities of the European Commission in the field of social and health services the EUROPEAN FORUM invites the European Commission, other governmental and non governmental organizations, stakeholders and social insurance institutions to engage in a dialogue in order to feed the expertise from accident insurances across Europe in the process of shaping the future of social security in Europe.