



PRESS RELEASE: Health insurance funds and health mutuals urge clarification of the current exemptions on public services and health services in CETA

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Health insurance funds and health mutuals welcome the announcement of European Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström on 5 July 2016 of CETA being a mixed agreement. Nevertheless, we regret the provisional implementation of the agreement. We believe that the current exemptions on public services and health services in CETA are not sufficient.

Officials in Brussels and politicians in national governments constantly confirm that health services are protected as a “public utility”, when they are “publicly funded” or a “service of general economic interest”. However, AIM members emphasise that health insurance funds and health mutuals are still included in the scope of the CETA and subject to all obligations that are not related to the market access principle.

“Access to healthcare for all must be preserved, health and social services must be completely and securely excluded from the scope of free trade agreements”, says Christian Zahn, President of AIM.

In its recommendations on CETA, which have been published today, AIM stresses that health insurance funds and health mutuals apply to numerous requirements notably to the principle of fair and equitable treatment and to the principle of protection against unlawful expropriation. Many of these principles include ambiguous and unclear terms. This could trigger investor claims, in case national governments want to modify the law relating to investments in the healthcare sector.

“Such investor claims could promote the risk of suppressing future legislation or high compensation payments”, warns Christian Zahn.

Although AIM members are not in favour of the Investment Court System (ICS) in CETA, they claim that the tribunal should be at least accessible for Member States and their social organisations such as trade unions, health insurance funds and health mutuals. Tribunals have to be established through precise and unambiguous terms so that no room for interpretation arises and regulation by the government in the sense of the common good is still possible.

AIM fully agrees that in certain areas, the European Union and its Member States would certainly benefit from the “Comprehensive and Economic Free Trade Agreement (CETA)”. However, for the sake of the patients, Free Trade Agreements should not apply to the sector of health and social services.

About AIM

The Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM) is an international umbrella organisation of not for-profit healthcare mutuals and health insurance funds in Europe and in the world which operate on the basis of solidarity. Currently, AIM's membership consists of 63 member organisation in 30 countries. In Europe alone they provide coverage of healthcare to around 200 million people. AIM strives via its network to make an active contribution to the preservation and improvement of access to health care for everyone.

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