

The European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy



February 19, 2007

The Honorable
Marilene Filbet,
President of the European Association of Palliative Care

Dear Ms. Filbet,

Recognizing the importance of your position as President of the European Association of Palliative Care, together with the tasks and contributions of your organization, this letter is written to inform you of the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (*ENHCC*), of which I serve as Coordinator, and to seek ways in which our two organizations can work together.

Since 1990, European chaplains have been coming together every two years to exchange their experiences in healthcare chaplaincy. Essentially, the *ENHCC* was formed at the 6th Consultation that took place at the Orthodox Academy of Crete in November of 2000. Based on the “Cretan Declaration”, the Network is made up of representatives from all the Christian denominations and chaplaincy organizations of Europe, which provide pastoral care in various health care facilities. The Network aims at mutual sharing and understanding both on a religious, cultural and organizational level. *Today the ENHCC consists of 46 official chaplaincy organizations from 32 European Countries. It is the only organization in Europe that brings chaplaincy together in such an inclusive way.*

Since its formation some seven years ago, we have had three other consultations (Finland 2002, Dublin 2004, and Lisbon 2006) at which *Standards for Health Care Chaplaincy for Europe* were adopted (see attachment), our Constitution was formed, and major areas of health care were discussed in relation to spiritual care need.

The *ENHCC* has formed working relations with offices of the EU Commission, the Council of European Churches (CEC), the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care. It has crossed the borders of Europe, building

a bridge of cooperation with the American Association of Professional Chaplains and other professional chaplaincy organizations throughout the world.

(For a better view of the make-up of the ENHCC, please visit our website (www.eurochaplains.org).

In the two meetings we have had with the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs, Mr. Margaritas Schinas, special attention was given to the area of palliative care and its close relation to spiritual health care.

As you know, in the World Health Organization's definitions of Palliative Care, direct reference is made to the need to "integrate the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care". In many references, spiritual, religious and existential aspects of care are cited as one of the major domains of quality Palliative Care. Chaplains throughout Europe are a significant part of the "support system" offered to help patients live an active life with an inner sense of quality and also serve as a major part of the "support system" for their families during times of illness and bereavement. Thus, the participants of the *ENHCC* firmly uphold that good practice for palliative care includes spiritual and religious care, within the realm of multidisciplinary team work, staff support, education and training.

To verify the above and to unite our efforts in providing quality care, during the last Consultation of the *ENHCC*, a special session was devoted to the area of Palliative Care. At the conclusion of our discussion, a "*Statement on Palliative Care*" was issued (see attachment). Together with this statement and the "*Standards of Health Care Chaplaincy in Europe*", we feel that firm groundwork and guidelines have been established in assuring professional and proper care in this sensitive area throughout Europe.

The European Association of Palliative Care and the ENHCC have many things in common which can allow us to work closely together. I would like to suggest that some basic steps be taken in this direction:

- 1) That each of us put our organizations as links on our respective web sites, thus giving our participants the opportunity to be informed of the developments in the area of health care.
- 2) That we share important information that is related to palliative care as dealt with by our respective organizations. It would be very beneficial if the ENHCC "*Statement on Palliative Care*" be given to the members of your organization.
- 3) That we work together in seeing how the EU Commission can become more sensitive to the issues of palliative care within Europe. This past October I attended a meeting in Brussels held by the Conference of

European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), in conjunction with the EU Commission, regarding "Social Services and Healthcare Services: A Contribution of the Churches and Church Organizations to the European Social Model". During this meeting, special mention regarding the area of palliative care was made both by the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs and myself as an area in which social and health care services could work together with the EU.

- 4) That we seek ways to network our efforts in different European countries, particularly in countries of Eastern Europe which are now beginning to develop programs for palliative care.

These are suggestions that I am making to establish an initial contact. I am sure that over time, once we have established a line of communication, we will be able to be more specific as to how our conjoint efforts can materialize into a constructive working relationship.

Hoping that you will be open to my invitation to establish contact, I relay the greetings of all the participants of the ENHCC,

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Stavros Kofinas

**Coordinator of the European Network of Healthcare Chaplaincy
(Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate)**

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