



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **THE FIRST EUROPEAN INFLUENZA SUMMIT**

BRUSSELS, 26 May 2011

Organized by the European Scientific Working group on Influenza (ESWI)

*Only by ensuring collaboration between all parties involved in the field of influenza, will Europe be able to lower the impact of the disease on public health. European countries are lagging behind in their efforts to protect citizens against the disease and EU Health Authorities acknowledge that new ways must be explored to involve healthcare groups that have previously remained unaddressed. Issued during the one-day influenza summit, organized by ESWI, the statements reflect a consensus that, in line with WHO's recommendations, at least 75% of the at-risk groups need to receive their annual vaccination against seasonal influenza.*

On 26 May 2011, the First European Influenza Summit brought together more than 70 representatives of organizations of healthcare providers, senior citizens, at-risk patients and public health authorities. The aim of the meeting was to provide all influenza partners with an informal platform to exchange good practices and to initiate concrete actions to improve public health protection against influenza. 11 expert lecturers, including the co-chair of the US National Flu Vaccine Summit, addressed the audience to elaborate on 11 different aspects of the fight against influenza.

In 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its vaccination recommendations for seasonal influenza, urging every Member State to annually immunize at least 75% of its senior citizens against influenza by 2010. In 2011, most of the European countries do not even come close to the

WHO recommended vaccination rates, despite European health care systems being amongst the best in the world. In fact, influenza still claims more lives than traffic accidents, especially among the risk groups, which include the elderly and patients with chronic disease like asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease... While EU countries are lagging behind Northern American countries such as Canada, the influenza partners at the European Influenza Summit (including international public health authorities like WHO and the EU Directorate-General for Health and Consumers) agreed that collaboration between all parties involved is key to improve public health protection against influenza. Illustrating the need of joining forces in a decisive partnership, WHO and EU representatives emphasized the importance of exploring ways to involve additional healthcare groups in the fight against influenza. By integrating health professionals like hospital pharmacists, general practitioners, community pharmacists and hospital managers in the summit's programme, ESWI answered this call. In the post-summit period, ESWI will continue to expand its network of influenza stakeholders and intensify its collaboration with them by launching specific tailor-made activities for them. The European Influenza Summit will be the annual pinnacle of this partnership collaboration.

#### About ESWI

*The European Scientific Working group on Influenza (ESWI) is a partnership organization of stakeholders with a clear mission: to reduce the number of influenza victims in Europe.*

*Partnership organizations like ESWI are established to meet specific objectives and to undertake projects to address problems that neither partner could tackle adequately on its own. A successful long-term partnership is built on common grounds. In the case of ESWI, this common ground is a social concern to improve public health in Europe.*

***If you require further information please check the ESWI website at [www.eswi.org](http://www.eswi.org) or contact the ESWI chair, Prof Ab Osterhaus, at [a.osterhaus@erasmusmc.nl](mailto:a.osterhaus@erasmusmc.nl) or +31 653 268 606.***