

**Ansprache von Antonios Antoniadis, Minister für Gesundheit,  
Familie und Soziales, anlässlich des Regions for Health Network  
Workshop**

Eupen, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Dear participants of the WHO Regional Health Network Workshop,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you all a good morning and a warm welcome to the beautiful city of Eupen, the capital city of the German speaking Community. I am very pleased to be here with you today.

Let me start by congratulating the organisers of today's event. You could not have picked a better place than the Heidberg Convent. You are the second external guests. Yesterday, the Prime Minister Elio di Rupo made his appearance as the first official guest after the opening ceremony on Thursday. After years of redecoration and rebuilding, the Convent officially reopened its doors last Thursday. Speaking of renovation, and I want to be honest with you: When I first read the words up-scaling and downscaling on the official invitation, I was a little bewildered. And suddenly, it made me think of my first weeks as minister.

The day I moved into my new office, I immediately saw the need for redecoration and repainting. But, you know how this is, before the work can begin, old pieces of furniture have to be removed. I thought: "no problem", except for one thing: the chunky old cupboard, three times bigger than the entrance door. Try picturing this for a brief moment. And then tell me how to fit it through the "tiny" door without destroying it entirely?

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe your task for the workshop is similar to the one I faced nearly two months ago. One big difference remains: your decisions and the outcome of your work will have a much greater impact and are far more important than my cupboard. This I am very sure of.

You will be laying the foundation for more efficient and better public health. This is the first WHO event ever to take place in the German speaking community.

Eupen lies at the heart of the Euregion-Meuse-Rhine. It was during the presidency of the German speaking Community that the EMR was the first - and currently only- Euregion to be admitted to the WHO Regions for Health Network. Being at the crossroads of three different cultures, it is a driving force within the network and has a lot to offer. We believe that Euregions like the EMR can be laboratories for European integration. So why not also laboratories for public health projects?

To go back to my original idea of up- and downscaling: You will carefully discuss and analyse various health-related projects or initiatives from one specific country, area or region. You will then look for ways of implementing them in the best possible way elsewhere. Sometimes you will have to add a few elements; you will have to up-scale, whereas oftentimes you will simply have to down-scale. The ultimate goal is to make it work.

In all likelihood, you will do what I did with the cupboard.

By the way, my cupboard was removed without being destroyed. I did some up- and down-scaling myself. I simply took away a few parts and all of a sudden, it fit through the tiny door. I then put it in another room, where I added other elements, so that it would be in perfect harmony with its new environment. I am sure you understand my metaphor.

I see in front of me experts from all over Europe. There is no doubt in my mind that you can achieve the goals you set for yourselves. Sadly, I will have to leave in about 40 minutes. I hope you will keep me informed about the progress you will make today and in the upcoming weeks. I am looking forward to reading the publication that is planned.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you some fruitful discussions but more importantly a lot of success. Enjoy your stay in the German speaking Community.

Thank you for your attention.