

FARMAINDUSTRIA, concerned about the hurdles of access to innovations in Spain

The General Assembly of the Association was held in Madrid today

Madrid, June 26th 2014.- FARMAINDUSTRIA held its Ordinary General Assembly in Madrid today and both the annual activities report and last term's accounts were approved, as well as the current budget. Likewise, the new Code of Good Practices for the Pharmaceutical industry was also ratified; it came into force in January, aligning the Spanish self regulatory system with the other existing systems in Europe with regard to prescription medicines promotion and interactions with professionals and healthcare organizations.

FARMAINDUSTRIA's President, Elvira Sanz, gave a speech to the members of the General Assembly where she reviewed last year's activities, detailing the main topics which currently shape the reality of the sector. Firstly, she stressed the difficult situation that the industry is going through, brought on by the readjustments of pharmaceutical expenditure provoked by the economic crisis. Offering examples, she mentioned that public pharmaceutical expenditure in pharmacies had been reduced by 28% during the last four years, reaching its lowest levels since 2002, or that pharmaceutical expenditure in prescriptions in relation to GDP was below 1% in 2013, which is below the Euro zone's average, even below the bailed out countries.

Thus, the Assembly acknowledged that not only pharmaceutical expenditure is under control, but also, with the latest regulations in force, the foundations for its future containment have been set. In this regard, Sanz stressed that there is no more room for changes and that the extreme situation the sector has been led to, should be redirected. "Now is the time to rebuild, aligning pharmaceutical growth to GDP, allowing the entry of innovative medicines at European paces and levels, thus granting a necessary stability for the sector"..

Going into further detail, patient access to innovative medicines is another very important topic for the sector, and therefore it was highlighted during the Assembly where the pharmaceutical industry as a whole expressed its concern for the deceleration of the incorporation of new products to the market, due both to delays in the authorization process as well as to the hurdles to access which have been implemented by some Spanish Autonomous Regions.

In this regard, the President of Farmaindustria regretted that different Regions are still adopting measures which seriously harm pharmaceutical innovation, breaching equity in access to healthcare and pharmaceutical supply; specifically pointing out the new framework agreement in Andalusia, as well as the pharmacological "rates" for patient and months that the Catalan healthcare service (CatSalut) want to implement in Cataluña starting July 1st. "It is necessary that the powers granted to the Central Government in article 88 of the Law of Guarantees are made full use of, in order to guarantee equity of access in the whole Spanish territory", she explained.

As far as the aim to gain efficient and quick access to innovations for patients, Elvira Sanz referred to the agreement in March of the Protocol of Collaboration with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Equity, expressing her hope that this will bring about benefits for the sector, healthcare and, ultimately, for citizens. For FARMAINDUSTRIA, this Protocol represents an explicit recognition by Ana Mato's Ministry to the sector's sacrifices and contributions made towards the sustainability of public accounts and the viability of Spanish National Health System.

Amongst the future challenges the Spanish pharmaceutical industry shall face, Elvira Sanz stressed the need to provide the sector with a stable and predictable framework as far as prices and access to new medicines are concerned. Besides, she also underlined the need to establish structural solutions in the new regional financing system, so that Autonomous Regions are able to finance and adequately budget their healthcare systems so that all Spanish citizens have access to the best and most innovate treatments in equal conditions.

During the Director General's report to the Assembly, Humberto Arnés reviewed the main topics in which the Association is working on. In particular, he referred to the future Price and Financing Royal Decree, expressing his aspirations that Farmaindustria will be able to actively contribute to its development; or the Plan to Defend the Brand that the Association has recently started, aiming at reducing the impact of the Cross Border Healthcare Royal Decree; which modifies prescriptions establishing the obligation to include the International Non Proprietary Name which does not imply that the brand name should not be included, as industry has reiterated, which ultimately benefits adherence to treatments.

Both Arnés and Sanz emphasized the importance of the pharmaceutical industry that holds a series of assets which makes it a strategic sector for the new economic model Spain needs. Amongst these assets is its high productivity (70% above Spanish industrial average), the fourth sector with the highest volume of exports (more than 10,000 € millions a year), the traits of the employment it generates; all jobs have highly qualified profiles (more of 50% are graduates), few temporary contracts (more that 90% are long term contracts), diversity (approximately 50% corresponds to female employment), as well as its absolute leadership in R&D investments (around 1,000 € millions a year).

"The pharmaceutical sector has demonstrated to be an industry capable of meeting the needs of our economy, offering unique leverages for a Spanish economic recuperation, but this however is in the Government's hands to know how to use it appropriately", concluded the President of FARMAINDUSTRIA.