

LETTER OF MOTIVATION

There are several reasons why I decided to apply for the position of Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

1. Throughout my professional career I always worked hard to promote public health in the European Region both in my national as well as international jobs. It has always been a strong motivation for me to promote extended life expectancy and improved health status of the population to contribute to the reduction of diseases (both communicable and non-communicable) as well as their determinants. This was particularly true when I ran the Eurohealth Programme of WHO for intensified cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Newly Independent States and later when I worked as Director of Country Health Development in the European Region to guide and coordinate the collaboration of WHO and its 51 Member States. But this is also true now when – among others – I guide the implementation of the Hungarian national public health programme as a Secretary of State, which aims to improve life expectancy in Hungary by 3 years over a 10 year period, and thus to close the gap that currently exists between indicators in my country and the EU average.

The other aspect of my present job – being also responsible for EU integration, acting as an EU Member State, planning and implementation of projects for the use of EU structural and social funds in health, public health and social issues – helps me to keep abreast of developments within the EU by preparing for and frequently attending Council meetings, conferences, representing my country in the High-Level Group on Health and Health Services which greatly contribute to the effective promotion of public health in Hungary as a new EU Member State. As the European Union citizens have rising expectations in health protection, as health is not only a public health but also an economic/socio-economic factor, as the public health responsibilities of the EU have increased substantially since the Amsterdam Treaty, as the threat of terrorism and in particular bioterrorism overshadows our everyday life, public health has become an important element of a safe and secure Europe.

2. I am also motivated to apply because I am aware of the threat that communicable diseases pose to human health. I would like to use my experience, partnership, skills to reduce this threat to a minimum by eliminating the limitations that currently exist.

The danger caused by communicable diseases still continues and infectious diseases are still an important cause of illness and death in several European countries even in the 21st century. New diseases, such as SARS, avian influenza emerge, and old diseases (such as diphtheria, malaria in the NIS) re-emerge. The threat of HIV/AIDS pandemic, the multiresistant tuberculosis all point to the need to be on alert. Furthermore the threat of deliberate, man-made disasters also exist through bioterrorism, which was clearly demonstrated by the anthrax alert in 2001. All these cause considerable anxiety to citizens and outbreaks can also put a large economic and public health burden on countries – therefore no effort should be spared for prevention.

These all point to the need to strengthen CD surveillance systems to enable us to detect and respond to both known and unknown risks and to develop and monitor prevention and control programmes.

The EU enlargement as well as international travel and migration between EU and the third countries make it even more important to invest in this area and to find a structured and systematic approach to respond effectively to all these threats by reinforcing the synergy between the existing infrastructures and resources at EU and national level, as well as international organizations, such as WHO.

During my years in WHO, the prevention and control of communicable diseases was one of the 6 main priorities of the Eurohealth Programme and therefore I was heavily involved in managing and coordinating these activities at the operational level. While working with WHO Governing Bodies, I was involved at the strategic level to develop the Organizations' response and also reinforce strategic partnership inside and outside the organization.

3. I am also motivated to apply, because the last two years when the proposal for the establishment of the Centre was discussed in various fora, reinforced my belief that

this new centre for Disease Prevention and Control will close the gap that currently exists in Europe by efficient networking, pooling resources, effective planning of preparedness and response to future health threats.

Currently huge resources exist in Europe to deal with communicable diseases: institutions, laboratories, experts, networks in Member States, at the level of the EU, within WHO but the coordination, harmonization, integration of their work is not optimal yet and therefore further synergy is needed to maximize all these efforts.

Function number 1 of the new Centre should therefore be to ensure that the existing European infrastructure, expertise and networks work together in a more efficient way to ensure pooling of resources towards more synergy. The Centre would therefore organize and coordinate the collaboration between EU institutions, Member States and other partners, such as WHO.

for the following main aims:

- to strengthen epidemiological surveillance, early warning and response networks at the European level;
- to develop independent, evidence-based scientific voice;
- to provide technical assistance as and when needed;
- to tackle possible emergencies

Function number 2 would be to act as a “clearing-house for information” towards all the partners, to provide them with evidence-based scientific and technical information that is updated, accurate and is presented in a way that is easily “digestible” by the users.

Function number 3 would be to establish strategic partnership with all the partners inside and outside the EU that have a pivotal role to prevent the threat from CDs in Europe, including WHO.

Function number 4 would be to communicate actively to all the important stakeholders on the issues involved.

The first two years would involve the gradual establishment of a small but efficient Centre but as much work as possible should be made during the first year to have the Centre up and running in the most important functions and regularly communicate this to the stakeholders to keep them fully informed and involved.

As my CV indicates, throughout my professional career, I always held highly responsible managerial positions with a lot of staff and large budget under my supervision. Furthermore many times it was required to develop new programmes (e.g. Eurohealth), new divisions (Information, Evidence, Communication Division of WHO/EURO) or in Hungary EU integration, transposition of the acquis and development of Hungarian infrastructure and human resources to meet EU requirements; development of a new public health programme in Hungary adopted by the Parliament etc., which always meant a new and exciting challenge for me and therefore did my best to meet the expectations. This is what I would plan to do also in this new position, if the trust is put in me.

My CV also indicates the skills and competencies I managed to develop in the various jobs. As the Director General of WHO, Dr. Brundtland nominated me for the position of the UN/UNDP Resident Representative, I had to go through a skills' and competencies' assessment in Pittsburgh, which confirmed that I have the competencies indicated in my CV.

It would be an honour for me to use my skills, experience and partnership for the benefit of this new Centre.

4. I am motivated to apply for one more reason.

My professional career has been a mixture of national and international jobs in various areas, which gave me a mixture of experience. I strongly believe that a

vertical, horizontal and functional rotation can greatly enrich one's knowledge and experience.

Following the 12 years I spent at WHO/EURO I felt that time has come to move on. In 2001-2002 I therefore applied for a UN Resident Representative job as well as a D2 job in WHO/HQ in Geneva where I was shortlisted. Then I received the invitation of the new Hungarian Government to come home and help the EU integration process in the field of health and social affairs. This was a difficult decision for me, but then I decided to resign from my post in WHO and come home for a while (2-3 years) and serve my country with my public health, international and EU experience. Thus in 2002 I was appointed by the President of Hungary – on the proposal of the Prime Minister – to be a Permanent Secretary of State – and a year later we decided to separate this job into two parts and since then I have been dealing with EU and public health issues. During these two years Hungary made considerable progress in EU related issues and now time has come for me to return to the international level.

Since I have been so heavily involved in EU related matters in recent years, and during the last 2-3 years I realized in how far the EU accession will help the new EU Member States, including mine, to close the gaps where they exist and to modernize our country, I have been strongly attracted by the EU, to join and be its staff and do whatever I can to further promote public health in Europe from a new position.

As Director of the new centre I could make good use of my professional experience; my knowledge of how to work with European countries and all important partners at European and international level; and my experience with result-based management. I would also bring the knowledge of how to establish a new institution; my communication skills to get important messages through; and last but not least my full dedication to this new job.

Zsuzsanna Jakab
Secretary of State
HUNGARY