



*FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ORGANISATIONS DE DONNEURS DE SANG
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF BLOOD DONOR ORGANIZATIONS
FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANIZACIONES DE DONANTES DE SANGRE*

President:

Niels MIKKELSEN

Bloddonorerne i Danmark

Vesterbrogade 191

DK 1800 FREDERIKSBERG – DANMARK

Tel. (+45) 7013 7014

Fax (+45) 7013 7010

E-mail: mikkelsen@bloddonor.dk

Secretary General:

Jean-Marie DURANT

Fédération Française pour le Don de Sang Bénévole

69, Boulevard Richar Lenoir

75011 PARIS - FRANCE

Tel. (+33) 01 48 78 93 51

Fax (+33) 01 42 81 06 43

E-mail: jean-marie.durant@federation-dondesang.asso.org

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Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou

European Commission

DG Health and Consumers

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Madam.

By pure accident we have learned about the proposal sent recently to members of the European Parliament about the demand from the Commission to receive with very short notice their view on suspending certain blood donor deferral rules within the European Union to be applied until June 30, 2010 because of possible lack of blood due to the pandemic of H1N1 flu.

The IFBDO has not taken an official position to the pandemic situation, as measures are different from country to country. We would, however, warn against easing the deferral rules in an exceptional situation, as this could lower the confidence in the blood supplies considerably of potential donors, both regarding the necessary supply and about the quality of the products collected and, in the end, of the patients.

In our opinion, the right action to take would be measures to increase the number of potential donors, for instance through specific and targeted campaigns in the media, more support to voluntary blood donor associations in their actions, to increase and adapt opening hours at the blood collection centers and better access to the blood centers.

We believe, that countries should do their best to prepare for and protect against an epidemic of the H1N1 flu by increasing stocks of blood products and components. Potential blood donors should be screened at the entrance to the blood centers in order not to spread the virus. Actions to increase awareness about blood donation should be directed to healthy donors, those who have already had the flu, and those who have been vaccinated against the flu.

Another aspect not to neglect is to have the necessary staff to guarantee that all donors can be received in order to be able to proceed normally with blood collection during the pandemic.

Our voluntary blood donor associations spend very much time and resources on general information to donors about existing deferral rules – and it would, accordingly, be extremely complicated to explain that these rules, based on medical and scientific evidence, will be derogated for a period and then reintroduced afterwards.

On this subject we would like to refer to the report from the European Blood Alliance (EBA) on specific measures to be taken in such a situation and their good advice given

We would also like to refer to Directive 2002/98, paragraph 25 on Information exchange, where the Commission is required “to hold regular meetings with the ... other relevant parties to exchange information on the experience acquired with regard to the implementation of this Directive”.

The IFBDO is surprised not to have been consulted directly on this proposal for exceptional measures, which have a direct impact on our work and on that of the voluntary blood donor associations in Europe. Concerned by this information, and representing more than 7 million donors in Europe, the IFBDO is ready with very short notice, to explain to you it's position, if this is desired.

Please accept, Madam, the expression of our highest respect.

On behalf of the IFBDO



Niels Mikkelsen
President



Jean-Marie Durant
Secretary General



Filippo Drago
European Delegate