

6 June 2017

To: Jean-Claude Juncker, President, European Commission

cc: Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President, European Commission  
Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner, DG Health & Food Safety  
Günther Oettinger, Commissioner, DG Budget & Human Resources  
Carlos Moedas, Commissioner, Research, Science & Innovation

## **EU Health Collaboration is crucial for Europe's future**

Dear President Juncker,

We, the undersigned organisations, representing EU health stakeholders, wish to express our grave concern about the future of health in European policies and programmes, in the light of your White Paper on the Future of Europe, and **propose an urgent meeting with you and your services on this topic.**

Our determined view, shared by the vast majority of EU citizens, is that **health is absolutely and unequivocally a core business of the EU.** Protection of a high level of human health and wellbeing is entrenched in the Treaties of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> EU collaboration in the field of health is indispensable for the future of Europe and rebuilding the trust of citizens in the European Union. We need **more health** to unlock the full potential of economic and social policies.

**70% of Europeans want the EU to do more for health**, according to the [most recent Eurobarometer survey](#). With such a strong, unequivocal demand from EU citizens for more action in the field of health, it is essential that this is not only maintained, but actually enhanced. The EU needs to continue deliver results that make a tangible difference in the daily lives of its citizens and thus re-establish people's trust in its institutions.

### **Health protection and improvement is a great success story of the European Union**

Life expectancy is rising across the EU. Accession to the Union is positively correlated with health gains and longer lives. Without EU level action and support of the Health Programme, EU citizens would be more at risk from health threats. Whilst there is a need for continuous improvement, protection standards for patients, consumers and workers are amongst the highest in the world, thanks to EU legislation. Indeed, **European integration and collaboration has brought great benefits for our health** and provides vital resources for our health services: free movement of health professionals, health technologies and patients. We are assured of our right to treatment in other member states, under common minimum safety and quality standards. We are also reassured that, thanks to cross-border collaboration, highly specialised expertise will be shared across borders, as the EU has just embarked in one of its most promising transnational initiatives, the European Reference Networks for Highly Complex and Rare Diseases - an area not only where EU-wide strategies are effective, but also where the added value of EU action is striking.

### **This is thanks to EU legislation, rights and protections which complement national laws.**

It is impossible to imagine a functioning internal market which does not consider and protect the health of its citizens, patients and consumers. Economic growth can only be built by healthy and resilient populations.

### **EU coordinated health action saves lives and reduces the burden of disease**

By facilitating closer cooperation, the EU has saved countless citizens' lives and contributed to their improvement. The Health Programme is a vital enabler for health policy formulation and for effective implementation and it has, over several years, triggered shared good practices on complex health topics for which EU cooperation is essential (such as patient safety and quality of care), encouraging upward

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<sup>1</sup> Article 168(1) TFEU requires that 'A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities.' This 'mainstreaming' obligation can also be found in Article 114(3) TFEU, and has been further reinforced following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, by Article 9 TFEU and Article 35 of the EU Charter.

convergence.

The conclusions of the previous Health Programme evaluation were extremely positive, with evidence of its impact beyond its relatively modest (financial) size, and exchange of knowledge and experience between member states which would not otherwise have taken place. Moreover, it “*made it possible to develop many activities... where the economic situation and budget restrictions would not have allowed them to be made a priority*” – now more critical than ever, when national health budgets are under even more pressure. The Programme was seen as providing value for money, and particularly important for ensuring a human rights-based approach to health policy.

We are therefore profoundly concerned that some of the scenarios in your White Paper on the Future of Europe would even consider reducing European action, cooperation and legislation and to step back from the protection and improvement of our health in Europe.

Instead, this role must be enhanced in the future through a new **robust and ambitious Health Programme**, convening member states to cooperate on health, underpinning vital collaboration with other institutions such as WHO and OECD and supporting health research.

### **Unprecedented health and social challenges can only be tackled at a European level**

**There has never been a stronger case, or a more vital moment for Europe to work together to protect our health.**

Whilst life-expectancy has improved, the years gained are often lived in relatively poorer health due to the proliferation of **preventable chronic diseases, compounded by huge disparities that persist within and between member states**. Average life expectancy is 12 years shorter for a man in Lithuania than in Italy. Discrimination and inequality remains widespread when it comes to access to healthy living conditions and healthcare. For example, the lives of Roma people and refugees are expected to be 10 years shorter than national averages and homeless women in Europe die on average at just 43 years of age because of the multiple health disadvantages they face. The Lisbon Strategy included a target of adding **two healthy life years** across the EU by 2020, a target that still needs to be met.

Europe is facing **important health threats** which must become a top priority for this Commission. Our precious, life-saving antibiotics are declining in effectiveness. Antimicrobial resistance is taking hold more rapidly around the world than expected. No single country can tackle that challenge alone. Bacteria and drug resistance cannot be stopped by borders. The alternative if we fail to act is unimaginable: 10 million deaths globally every year by 2050.<sup>2</sup> Rich countries will not be immune. Those of us from countries which take high quality healthcare systems for granted arguably have the most to lose.

National governments were expecting, and calling for, European Commission support in the form of a chronic disease strategy. The majority of Member States want more EU action for health, especially disease prevention and support to increase the safety, quality and efficiency of care, **to aid their own efforts to make their health systems more sustainable**.

### **Common challenges to Europe’s health systems require common action**

National governments **remain responsible for their health systems**, but European health systems face common challenges – a necessary shift from disease-focused, hospital-centred care to person-centred, long-term chronic disease management where patients, families and communities play a key role.

**Member States thus need cross-border support**, in the form of expertise, coordination, exchange of data, evidence and best practices, and programme financing.

National governments **cannot address the threats to health and health services alone**. We face common challenges from drug-resistant infections, spikes in chronic diseases, obesity, alcohol-related harm, infectious diseases, emerging technologies, rising prices of medicines, and inequities in access to healthcare, that can be **tackled together far more effectively**.

### **Looking ahead: Commit to Health and Sustainable Development**

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<sup>2</sup> Review on Antimicrobial Resistance: <https://amr-review.org/home>

Looking ahead, the EU must not shy away from stronger engagement in the field of health. On the contrary, the challenges we are facing and the opportunity to continue demonstrating to European citizens the added value of the EU action on health, compels health to become a EU flagship policy that promotes stronger protection for patients and consumers and ultimately improves people's lives.

If the EU steps back from protecting patients and consumers and improving our health it would irreparably damage the **institutions' credibility and trustworthiness**.

Therefore, a strong future Health Programme is crucial, not least to ensure that voices from civil society - patients, consumers, health professionals, epidemiologists and technical experts - are represented in policy dialogues which build on all available evidence and expertise.

For this we need strong high-level leadership inside the Commission, with specific responsibility for health. Mainstreaming health in other Commission Directorates will not work without stimulus, guidance, knowledge, expertise, and leadership from a strong Directorate for Health.

This is evidenced by recent developments on the Digital Health Agenda, and the symbiotic relationship between DG SANTÉ and DG CONNECT. Other EU policies will be jeopardised without an appropriate health policy lens. Efforts around the Social Pillar and the European Solidarity Corps are not replacements for health leadership within the Commission but rather, should be highly complementary measures to ensure maximum impact on the ground.

The EU has committed to **deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals** both within the EU and globally, with a key goal on health.

Health is also high on the international policy agenda – the G20 under Germany's leadership is discussing antibiotic resistance. This is because health and access to good quality healthcare and social care are primary concerns for everyone. Yet international institutions lack the mechanisms for real implementation that make a difference to people's daily lives.

This makes the EU's role – and the necessity to **do more, not less** – absolutely key. **This also requires health leadership and expertise** within the Commission working in concert with the health community.

**In conclusion:**

We call for an enhanced EU action in the field of health that brings the EU closer to its citizens, by protecting patients and consumers and improving people's health. We call for a EU action on health that fosters cross-country collaboration, integrates the action of Member States and helps them to address the unprecedented challenges we are facing. We call for EU action on health supported by a robust EU Health Programme and the leadership of a dedicated Directorate in the European Commission.

We request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to explore these issues in more detail and agree a viable way forward.

Yours sincerely,



Archie Turnbull  
President  
European Public Health Alliance



Marco Greco  
President  
European Patients Forum

## **SIGNING ORGANISATIONS (in alphabetical order)**

Access to Medicines Ireland	Diabéticos de Portugal (APDP)	Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota (CZR)
Association of Private Hospitals of Austria	Association Fibrose Pulmonaire Idiopathique Pierre Enjalran (APEFPI)	Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Enfermedades Respiratorias (CIBERES)
Active Sobriety, Friendship and Peace	Association for Culture, Education and Communication (ACEC)	CHEM Trust
AGE Platform Europe	Association for Inherited Metabolic Diseases “Aspida Zois”	Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Alcohol Action Ireland	Association for Natural Medicine in Europe (ANME)	Center for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation (STUDIORUM)
Alzheimer Albania	Association Française du Syndrome Phelan-McDermid	Center of Allergy & Immunology
Alzheimer Bulgaria	Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM)	Center of Resources fo Social Inclusion (CRIS)
Alzheimer Europe	Association nationale de prévention en alcoologie et addictologie (ANPAA)	Center of Resources for Community
Alzheimer Nederland	Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)	Center Women and Modern World (WMW)
Alzheimer Portugal	Association of Private Hospitals of Austria	CLCV Oise France
Alzheimer Society of Finland	Associazione Italiana Chiropratici (AIC)	Cyprus Federation of Patient organisations
Alzheimer Switzerland	Azienda ULSS n.3 “Serenissima” Venezia	Debra Belgium
Alzheimer Uniti Italia	Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal)	Duchenne Parent Project
Angioedema Belgium	Belgian Association of Public Health	Dunare.EDU
Anonymous AIDS Association	BEUC	Dutch Liver Patients Association
Asociación en defensa de la Sanidad Publica de Castellón (ACDESA – Castellón)	Bulgarian Society of Patients with Pulmonary Hypertension	eHealth Forum
Asociatia Central Rromilor “Amare Rromentza”	Cancer Focus Northern Ireland	EKPIZO
Asociatia de Sprijin Pentru Grupuri Expuse Riscului de Excluziune Sociala (ASGERES)	Cancer Research UK	Eurochild
Asociatia Evanghelie Zappa-Brosteni	Catholic University of the Sacred Heart Rome	European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)
Asociatia Partida Romilor Pro-Europa	Center for Education and Human Rights	European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP)
Asociatia pentru Incluziune Sociala “Proetnica”		European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
Asociatiei Nationale Miastenia Gravis Romania		European Alcohol Policy
Associação Portuguesa Hospitalização Privada (APHP)		
Associação Protetora dos		

Alliance (Eurocare)	and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)	European Parkinson's Disease Association (EPDA)
European Alliance of Neuromuscular Disorders Associations (EAMDA)	European Forum For Primary Care (EFPC)	European Partnership for Improving Health, Equity & Wellbeing (EuroHealthNet)
ERN-LUNG	European Federation of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI)	European Patients' Forum (EPF)
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)	European Pharmaceutical Students' Organisation (EPSA)
European Association for Senior Hospital Physicians (AEMH)	European Federation of Patients' Associations for Anthroposophic Medicine (EFPAM)	European Platform Patient Organisations Science and Industry (EPPOSI)
European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP)	European Federation of Salaried Doctors (FEMS)	European Public Health Association (EUPHA)
European Association of Primary Care Partners (EAPCP)	European Fresh Produce Association (Freshfel Europe)	European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)	European Haemophilia Consortium (EHC)	European Public Health Centre (EPHC)
European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)	European Health Management Association (EHMA)	European Regional and Local Health Authorities (EUREGHA)
European Ayurveda Association (EUAA)	European Hematology Association (EHA)	EURORDIS Rare Diseases Europe
European CanCer Organisation (ECCO)	European Heart Network (EHN)	European Region of the World Confederation for Physiotherapy
European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC)	European Institute for Women's Health (EIWH)	European Respiratory Society (ERS)
European Central Council of Homeopaths (ECCH)	European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA)	European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)
European Chiropractors' Union (ECU)	European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA)	European Society of Anaesthesiology
European Committee for Homeopathy (ECH)	European Medical Students' Association	European Shiatsu Federation
European COPD Coalition (ECC)	European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)	European Specialist Nurses Organisations
European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO)	European Network of Fibromyalgia Associations (ENFA)	European Umbrella Organisation for Psoriasis Movements (EUOPSO)
European Critical Care Foundation (ECCF)	European Network of Medical Residents in Public Health (EuroNet MRPH)	European Union of Private Hospitals (UEHP)
European Digital Peer Citizen Patients Alliance (EuDiPPA)	European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP)	FECMA Federación Española de Càncer de Mama
European Disability Forum (EDF)		Fertility Europe
European Federation of Allergy		Fipra International

Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare - THL	(HUFERDIS – RIROSZ)	Organisation (FLIGHT)
France Assos Santé	Hungarian Medical Association of the United Kingdom (HMA-UK)	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Frankfurt School of Finance and Management	Hungarian Osteoporosis Patient Association (HOPA)	Longfibrosepatientenvereniging
Friends of the Earth Europe	Hunger And Thirst Foundation	Lund University
Fundación de Ciencias del Medicamento y productos sanitarios (FUNDAMED)	Inclusion Europe	Lung Cancer Europe (LuCE)
Fundación Secretariado Gitano	IndustriAll European Trade Union	MAIS PARTICIPAÇÃO, melhor saúde
Fundamed	Institute Cancer De La Loire Lucien Neuwirth	Malta Association of Public Health Medicine (MAPHM)
Fundatia Baylor Marea Neagra	International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF)	Malta Continenace Care Association (MCCA)
German Alzheimer Association	International Federation of Anthroposophic Medical Associations (IVAA)	Malta Dementia Society
GesundheitsAkademie e.V. Bielefeld	International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)	Malta Health Network (MHN)
Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks-Europe (GAMIAN Europe)	International Medical Cooperation Committee Denmark (IMCC)	Médecins du monde
Global Health Advocates (GHA) France	International Step by Step Association (ISSA)	Mediterranean Roma Associations Federation (AKROMFED)
Global Health Mentorships	International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG)	Mental Health Europe (MHE)
Hälsan & Arbetslivet, Region Västra Götaland	IOGT International	Multiple Sclerosis Society – Malta
HCWH Europe	IOGT-NTO	National Association of Pensioners – Malta
Health Action International (HAI)	Irish Lung Fibrosis Association	National Center for Rare Diseases (ISS)
Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH)	Istituto Superiore di Sanità	National Institute of Health of Italy
Health Equalities Group	Jagiellonian University Medical College	National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia
Health First Europe	Johannes Kepler University Linz	National Patients' Organisation – Malta
Hellenic Cancer Federation – ELL.O.K.	Just Treatment	NIPH Kosovo
HTAP Belgique	Lega per la Neurofibromatosi 2 Onlus	Osteogenesis Imperfecta Federation Europe (OIFE)
Hungarian Allergy Association	Liceu de Dones	Panhellenic Federation of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders
Hungarian Alliance for Tobacco Control	Life Quality Improvement	PSC Patients Europe
Hungarian Federation of People with Rare and Congenital Diseases Network		Pensionistenverband Österreichs

Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)	SALUS Charitable Foundation	The Cyprus Alzheimer Association
Polish Society for Health Programs (PSHP – PTPZ)	Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)	The European Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis & Related Disorders Federation (EU-IPFF)
Programmes of Development of Social Support and Medical Co-Operation (PRAKSIS)	SCImPULSE Foundation	The Salvation Army, EU Affairs Office
Pulmonale Hypertensie (HTAP)	Slovenian Homeopathic Society	Transparency International – Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare Programme
Rare Disease Organisation Belgium (RaDiOrg)	Smoke Free Partnership (SFP)	University of Konstanz
Retina International	Social Platform	University of L'Aquila
Roma Cultural Center O Del Amenca	Società Italiana di alcologia (SIA)	University of Tampere
Roma Center “Amare Rromentza”	Société Française de Santé Publique (SFSP)	Usher Syndrome Coalition Forum Austria
Romani CRISS	SOIF DE VIE	Védegylet Egyesület
Romanian Cancer Society	SOS Hépatites Fédération	Vie & Cancer
Romanian National Alliance for Rare Diseases	Suomen ASH	Women’s Brain Project
Royal College of Physicians (RCP London)	Swedish Network for International Health (SNIH)	W.Z.C. Domino
SAFE – Safe Food Advocacy Europe	Tallin Children’s Hospital Foundation (CHF)	WEMOS
	The Alzheimer Society of Ireland	World Federation for Incontinence Patients (WFIP)
	The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER)	









Deutsche Alzheimer  
Gesellschaft e.V.  
Selbsthilfe Demenz







International Federation of  
Anthroposophic Medical  
Associations



European Academy of Paediatrics  
Paediatric Section of U.E.M.S