

Dear President Ursula von der Leyen,

We, representatives of the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance, gathering more than 30 health civil society organisations representing health professionals, citizens, patients and public health organisations, wish to request a meeting with you to discuss our concerns regarding the nomination of the next Commissioner for Health.

Our [elections manifesto](#) outlined the need to prioritise health for the next European Commission and European Parliament's mandates. For health to be given the importance it deserves, beyond the ambitions expressed in the mission letter, it requires a nominee with a relevant and appropriate background to meet the demands of this critical topic.

Two crucial learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic are the need for a strong EU Health Union, based on solidarity and member states coordination in the face of common threats, and the importance of community involvement for successful public health responses. The need for community involvement has since been highlighted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a key element, especially in health emergencies¹. In light of the multiple threats to health the EU is facing, from climate change and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to increasing gaps in health and well-being², health workforce and medical products shortages as well as antimicrobial resistance and the high unmet needs of people living with a rare disease, it is paramount to ensure the nominee for the health portfolio has the necessary background and commitment to drive ambitious action in a spirit of collaboration and partnership.

Democracy, fundamental rights, and the need for a dynamic and active civil society are core EU values. Including civil society within the EU is not just a responsibility for the Member States, but for the EU institutions too. One key aspect to enable civil society organisations in the field of health to play their important mission is the availability of sustainable funding opportunities under the EU4Health programme. Recent decisions to cut the EU4Health budget and the absence of any reference to the programme in your mission letter are concerning signals that health is being deprioritised, at a time when investment in more resilient healthcare systems has never been more crucial.

We would like to meet with you to discuss our concerns. We request assurance that the Commissioner nominee for the health portfolio is not only fully committed to driving an ambitious health agenda at EU level, building on the legacy of the previous mandate, but also to working hand in hand with civil society organisations to achieve it.

The EU4Health Civil Society Alliance

¹ Eurohealth (2021). Co-creating a healthier Europe: a European Health Union for and with civil society A civil society perspective. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352266/Eurohealth-27-2-7-9-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

² Competence Centre on Foresight (2023). Widening health-related inequalities. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/widening-health-related-inequalities_en

Signatories

- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- European Patients' Forum (EPF)
- Alzheimer Europe
- EURORDIS - Rare Diseases Europe
- Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)
- EUROCAM
- European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
- European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Association (EFA)
- European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA)
- European Health Management Association (EHMA)
- European Heart Network (EHN)
- European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA)
- European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP)
- European Public Health Association (EUPHA)
- Fertility Europe
- International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
- International Federation of Anthroposophical Medical Associations (IVAA)
- Psychedelic Access and Research European Alliance (PAREA)

