
Reference DZ/2019/25

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Dear Ms. Kyriakides,

On behalf of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) we congratulate you on your appointment as Commissioner Designate for Health. Your track record as a passionate advocate for health instils confidence in your ability to lead decisively on health issues in Europe over the coming five years. We welcome the priorities that you are being tasked with in the mission letter¹ from Dr Ursula von der Leyen, and we are glad to see that health is being recognised as an important area of work for the European Commission. If Europe is to continue to prosper and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it will be crucial to address inequalities in all actions and policies.² European advances, in development of medicines and technologies, clean air, or digitalisation, should reach everyone.

As a European umbrella organisation of national public health associations, we strongly support the priority given to the health issues listed in the mission letter, such as vaccination, health data, antimicrobial resistance, combating non-communicable diseases, access to healthcare and health research. EUPHA is an international, multidisciplinary, scientific organisation, bringing together around 20,000 public health experts for professional exchange and collaboration throughout Europe. We encourage a multidisciplinary approach to public health and we encourage inter-sectoral working for health pursued in all the work streams. Furthermore, as an organisation with members from 47 European countries including all EU Member States, we are all too aware that health issues do not respect national borders. We therefore need to work with our neighbouring countries beyond the EU as well as at a global level if we wish to truly be ambitious in what we achieve for population health.

In addition to the priorities listed in the mission letter we would like to draw your attention to other key threats to public health which we believe merit a strong focus in the coming years. Action on the commercial determinants of health needs to be stepped up. We are particularly concerned about the strategies and approaches being used to promote products and choices that

¹ Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/mission-letter-stella-kyriakides_en.pdf

² WHO (2019). Healthy, prosperous lives for all: the European Health Equity Status Report (2019). Available at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-equity-status-report-2019>


are detrimental to health of children and adolescents.³ It is essential to recognise the roles of diverse non-state actors, distinguishing between those that pursue public interest objectives from those that pursue purely profitable interests which run counter to health and wellbeing.⁴

In our world, today, there is an abundance of information available to us, including on health issues. Unfortunately, information about health is sometimes false and misleading. It is of utmost importance to counter disinformation and misinformation related to health topics in order to ensure that citizens have trustworthy information on which they can base their health choices and for policy makers to make evidence informed health policies.

In addition to the listed priorities and threats to public health, it is essential to remain flexible in responding to new public health issues and threats that may arise. The recent cases of respiratory illnesses associated with vaping requires an effective and appropriate response from public health decision-makers at the European level.

We are looking forward to working together to protect and promote public health and wish you success in your upcoming hearing.

Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, EUPHA President



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³ Kickbusch I, Allen L, Franz C. The commercial determinants of health. The Lancet Global Health. 2016 Dec 1;4(12):e895-6. Available at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(16\)30217-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(16)30217-0/fulltext)

⁴ The Vienne Declaration. Available at https://eupha.org/repository/advocacy/Vienna_Declaration_final_version_update02062017.pdf