

Joint Statement | May 2020



COVID-19 has shown EU action on health is more urgently needed than ever

9 ways the European Institutions and Member States should respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

The global new Coronavirus disease pandemic is putting European solidarity and health systems' capacity to the test, exposing one of the main weaknesses of the European project. More specifically, there is a long-lasting lack of significant tools and resources to develop a common policy addressing health and care, which would place shared interest above national demands. A single united European response requires robust coordination, sufficient resources and a strong mandate for action.

Today, Europe is still too weak on health policy. The Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the vulnerability of our healthcare systems, our societies and our health. Severe disruption of care for people living with chronic, communicable or rare conditions, the Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) epidemic, shortages and unaffordable costs of healthcare and medicines, inadequacy of resources and health system organisation, slow uptake of emerging technologies, insufficient and unequal access to prevention, treatment and healthcare services, the emerging burden of poor mental health, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and environmental risk factors, are but a few examples of the challenges affecting millions of people living in Europe. It is high time to permanently entrust the European Union with more resources and stronger competences in the field of public health, especially in emergency situations.

The healthcare community has welcomed single or small-scale actions of solidarity that different countries have shown demonstrating the importance of community participation and empowerment. However, a united response to the current crisis is essential. The EU must adapt to this new reality guided by its core principles of unity and solidarity. This is not possible if the EU is still lacking a common vision, a policy framework and rapid response mechanisms. This is not possible if poor coordination undermines joint efforts, perpetuating both the weaknesses of our health systems and the inequalities in our societies. To effectively deal with the COVID-19 aftermath, ensure access to care, reduce the damage of future pandemics and tackle shared challenges, the fundamentals of the EU mandate for health must be re-assessed and re-organised.

Shaping the future of health in the EU together is more urgent than ever. Therefore, we 17 European NGOs are uniting our voices in a joint EU4Health campaign and calling to act now for a stronger and more ambitious European health policy. To this end, we call upon the European Commission, Parliament and National Governments to:

Boost funds and resources for health in the EU

1. Re-establish an independent, sizeable and much more integrated health programme within the EU budget;
2. Increase financial resources allocated to the health portfolio within the Multi-annual Financial Framework to ensure the financial means for multi-sectoral health action;
3. Revise the EU research priorities and put common health challenges and health system strengthening at the heart of the research and innovation agenda, involving civil society actors.

Strengthen EU health action under the current mandate

4. Place European health agencies in a better position to fight common health challenges, by reinforcing the role of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and extending resources and mandate of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to tackle NCDs and communicable diseases;
5. Establish Health-in-all-Policies as the new normal in policymaking and providing more resources for the Commissioner for Health and her services to ensure coherence and consistency;
6. Prioritise and ensure systematic health impact assessment of EU policies to ensure their positive effect on improving wellbeing and health outcomes which are influenced by multiple determinants.

Re-think EU healthcare competencies and vision for the future

7. Implement the right to health enshrined in the EU Charter by defining its basic elements every European shall enjoy without prejudice and with equal conditions;
8. Develop a European Health Vision for care and prevention, with an EU roadmap to improve efficiency based on improved coordination among national health systems, preparedness, sustainability and minimum standards of care;
9. Convene an inclusive European debate aiming to strengthen the EU mandate on health.

People living in Europe cannot wait for the next pandemic. The time to invest in a healthy future is now: we need more EU action on health.

Signatories

Association of European Cancer Leagues
Alzheimer Europe
European AIDS Treatment Group
EUROCAM
European Cancer Patients Coalition
Eurocare
European AIDS Treatment Group
European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Association
European Heart Foundation
European Health Management Association
European Patients' Forum
European Public Health Alliance
European Public Health Association
EURORDIS – Rare Diseases Europe
European Respiratory Society
International Federation of Anthroposophic Medical Associations
Mental Health Europe
Smoke Free Partnership

To add your name to the list of supporting organisations, click [here](#)

ABOUT EU4HEALTH

70% of Europeans want the EU to do more for health, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey. This is why a pool of European organisations came together to ensure that the European institutions will continue to guarantee health protection and promotion.

EU4Health brings together organisations that share the vision of a Europe where all people are as healthy as they can be throughout their lives. More information on the signing organisations' contribution to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic can be found [here](#)