

MANIFESTO FOR A EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION

Preamble

In 2020, an invisible virus swept through Europe, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and many others with severe disability. Economic activity has crashed, forcing governments to intervene in ways that would have been unimaginable.

This will not be the last pandemic. There will also be many other threats to health, including the effects of climate change, antimicrobial resistance, and much else. We cannot continue with life as before. We have to safeguard our societies but in ways that are proportionate to the dangers which threaten them. We must welcome the clear statement by the European Commission President Dr Ursula von der Leyen in her “State of the Union” address, setting out the necessity to create a stronger European Health Union (EHU), building on recent efforts by the European Commission to take action on cross border health threats.

The governments of the European Union’s Member States, in successive Treaties, have committed to a high level of human health protection.¹ In the Charter of Fundamental Rights, they have committed to humanity, dignity, and solidarity.² In the Sustainable Development Goals, they have committed to a sustainable future for all. They are also all committed, as members, to the Constitution of the World Health Organization. However, these safeguards for health are not, on their own, sufficient.

We, the undersigned, as European citizens, call on our political leaders, meeting together in the European Council and the Conference on the Future of Europe, to take the next step, to commit to creating a European Health Union.

Goals

A European Health Union will:

- a) Strive for health and wellbeing of all Europeans, with no one left behind;
- b) Strengthen **solidarity** within and among Member States, based on the principle of progressive universalism, providing support, including universal health coverage, for all, but with particular attention to the needs of those who are disadvantaged;

1 Art 168 TFEU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12008E168>

2 https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights_en

- c) Ensure **environmental sustainability**, by adopting the European Green Deal³ and prioritising measures to promote One Health, the concept that links our health with that of the animals with which we share this planet;
- d) Provide **security** for all Europeans, protecting them from the major threats to health and from the vulnerability that is created by living a precarious existence;
- e) Enable **everyone's voice to be heard**, so that policies that affect their health are created with them and not for them.

Policies and other measures

These goals can be achieved in a number of ways:

- a) The status of **health policy** in the European Treaties will be strengthened, with provisions for a European Health Union incorporated into Articles 2 and 3 of a revised Treaty on European Union, giving the European Union explicit competence to take action on health policy;
- b) The **voice of the citizens of Europe**, expressed through their representatives in the European Parliament, will be heard more strongly;
- c) Recognising the cross-border nature of many threats to health, the **Health Threats** regulatory framework will be revised, including the proposed creation of a Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), enhanced mechanisms provisions to procure adequate supplies in emergencies, to enable the rapid publication of consistently defined health data (including strengthened roles for EUROSTAT and ECDC, working closely with Member States), to strengthen the mechanisms for rapid generation of accurate and trusted evidence from research and practice, and to counter the threat from “fake news”.
- d) The European Union's activities in **health research** will be expanded, with an enhanced health programme within Horizon Europe, the creation of a European equivalent of the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), a strengthened EMA, other measures to promote research collaboration across Europe;
- e) Recognising the importance of the **health workforce**, the European Union and the Member States will work together to address the unequal distribution of health workforce capacities in Europe, providing support to regions that have difficulties in attracting health workers as well as promoting training and education of health professionals according to

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

common standards, coupled with measures to safeguard the rights of health workers, including those from other parts of the world.

- f) Recognising the benefits of European collaboration on **rare diseases**, measures to support those who are affected by them will be strengthened by a health security mechanism.
- g) Recognising the global nature of many threats to health, the EU will develop a **Global Health Policy**, working with the UN and its specialised agencies, and especially a strengthened World Health Organization, and other multinational organisations contributing to health, to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Principles

All health policies will be based on a series of principles:

- a) Priority to measures that deliver **wellbeing and longer and healthier lives** for all Europeans;
- b) **Precaution, proportionality, and dignity**, while also respecting **fundamental rights**, including equality on any grounds, including sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation of gender, ethnicity, or sexuality⁴;
- c) Respect for regional and national differences, both in the design and prioritisation of policies, taking account of differing contexts, and in their implementation, taking account of the principle of **subsidiarity**;
- d) **Solidarity** within and among Member States and with the rest of the world, with measures to safeguard their ability to deliver safe and effective health services. No one is safe until all are safe.

On 9 May 2020, Europe commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration that paved way for the EU. The history of Europe over seven decades demonstrates that major transformations are rarely fast or easy. Let us be inspired by the words of Robert Schuman: World health “...cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it”.

⁴ Art 21 Charter of Fundamental Rights

1. Klaus Hänsch - The 18th President of the European Parliament, the Member of the Presidium of the European Convention
2. Jean-Claude Juncker - President of the European Commission from 2014 to 2019, the 23rd Prime Minister of Luxembourg from 1995 to 2013.
3. Ilona Kickbusch - Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, for many years worked on senior position for the World Health Organization
4. Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis - former European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety (2014-2019), former member of the European Convention
5. Violeta Bulc, former European Commissioner for Transport (2014-2019), former Deputy Prime Minister of Slovenia
6. Dorli Kahr-Gottlieb - Secretary General of the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG)
7. Josep Figueras - PhD, Director and cofounder of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies
8. Mark Flear - PhD, Reader in Law at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland
9. Tamara Hervey, Professor of European Union Law at the University of Sheffield, UK
10. Martin McKee -Professor of European Public Health and Medical Director at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Research Director at the European Observatory
11. Annik de Ruijter - Associate Professor in health law. Research fellow at the University of Amsterdam School of Law, Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance and on the board of the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development
12. Markus Schneider – PhD, Director of BASYS, Augsburg, Germany
13. Birutė Tumenienė - PhD, Lithuanian representative on the Board of Member States for European Reference Networks. Chair of Working group on ERN integration into national systems
14. Dr Matthias Wismar – PhD, Programme Manager at the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies