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## **RESOLUTION**

### **of the conference**

# **‘Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scientific and Practical Aspects’**

## **organised by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the Research Council of Lithuania**

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a social crisis in many countries, which had a huge impact on societies, health systems, and economies. At the same time, the pandemic has also provided valuable lessons that can be crucial for dealing with similar crises in the future.

The challenges posed by the pandemic are being analysed not only by national governments and international organisations, but also by scientists, whose insights can contribute to the management of global crises. To encourage researchers to join forces and find innovative solutions, the Research Council of Lithuania funded over 70 research projects to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences through a call for proposals between 2020 and 2022. To inform the public about the work of scientists and their results, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, together with the Research Council of Lithuania, organised the conference ‘Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scientific and Practical Aspects’ on 8 February 2024, which presented research projects conducted at various Lithuanian research institutions in the fields of the social, medical, and technological sciences. Having discussed the outcomes of the conference, the participants and organisers adopted the following resolution:

Considering the lessons learned from the past COVID-19 pandemic, the fight against possible future epidemics and pandemics should be based on a biopsychosocial approach and a holistic understanding of threats to human security. The conference participants and organisers propose the following recommendations.

#### **1. Systematic preparation for potential epidemics and pandemics:**

- establishing continuous epidemiological and health monitoring and a rapid information exchange system between various national authorities and between countries;
- developing and continuously improving global and local crisis management plans, involving multidisciplinary experts, public organisations, academia and business representatives;
- taking scientific expertise into account when considering crisis management plans and making decisions.

#### **2. Enhancing the infrastructure of the health care system:**

- investing in the development and modernisation of the health care system, including the infrastructure of treatment facilities and diagnostic laboratories, and in the application of medical innovation;
- building crisis-resilient supply chains to allow uninterrupted delivery of medical supplies and equipment;

- ensuring provision of health (including mental health) services, especially in times of crises and in particular for the most vulnerable groups.

### **3. Vaccination policy after the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- a thorough analysis of the pandemic vaccination strategy, assessing its positive and negative aspects and the experience of different countries;
- planning vaccination policies based on scientific evidence and expert advice.

### **4. Encouraging and supporting scientific research:**

- supporting research analysing the consequences of COVID-19 and other social crises, ensuring the longevity, coherence, and sustainability of such research;
- identifying problems or gaps in competences in the fields of social crisis management and research in infectious diseases and initiating national research programmes to address these issues.

### **5. Public information and education:**

- enhancing communication strategies and encouraging the public to use reliable sources of information to prevent the spread of misinformation;
- increasing public confidence in science by presenting scientific achievements in an attractive and comprehensible way, thus bridging the gap between scientists and the public;
- expanding educational programmes for the public and health professionals on social crises, crisis management, health improvement, and prevention of infectious diseases.

### **6. International cooperation:**

- active participation in international organisations (e.g., One Health) and in the initiatives aimed to coordinate actions and share best practice.

### **7. Mobilisation of resources:**

- building on the insights of scientists to increase the financial resilience of the state in times of crises;
- planning and reserving sufficient financial resources to strengthen the health care system and management of crises;
- encouraging cooperation of public and private sectors for efficient use of resources;
- provision of funds for ongoing (continuous, sustainable) research on the monitoring of personal and public health.

### **8. Promoting social-cultural responsibility:**

- promoting personal responsibility of each member of society and the imperative for compliance in times of crises;
- involving the public in the deliberations and decision-making process to promote transparency of decisions and public trust.

### **9. Application of technologies:**

- using the latest technologies, such as artificial intelligence and data analysis, for epidemiological forecasting and management of potential crises.

### **10. A more global approach to health:**

- adopting best practices from other countries of the world pursuing the biopsychosocial approach to health;
- building on international research and innovation to respond rapidly to emerging threats of infectious diseases;
- promoting initiatives protecting biodiversity and addressing solutions to the climate crisis, aiming to reduce the threat of animal pathogens to humanity;
- promoting the mobility of researchers and health professionals and exchange of experience between them at the international level.

Based on the analysis of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, these recommendations should help to shape public policies that could respond effectively to a wide range of global and local crises.

Prof. Jūras Banys, president of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

Prof. Gintaras Valinčius, chair of the Research Council of Lithuania

Prof. Limas Kupčinskas, chair of the Division of Biological, Medical, and Geosciences of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

Prof. Aurelija Žvirblienė, chair of the COVID-19 commission of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

Prof. Vilmantė Borutaitė, member of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, chair of the Committee of the Natural and Technical Sciences of the Research Council of Lithuania

Dr Diana Janušauskienė, head of the Social Change Research Unit, Institute of Sociology, Lithuanian Centre of Social Sciences, chief researcher, president of the Lithuanian Sociological Society

Prof. Roma Jusienė, director of the Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University