

To: **Antonio TAJANI**, European Parliament President
Cc: **Manfred WEBER**, Chair, Group of the European People's Party
Udo BULLMANN, Chair, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
Guy VERHOFSTADT, Chair, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
Syed KAMALL and **Ryszard Antoni LEGUTKO**, Co-Chairs, European Conservatives and Reformists Group
Ska KELLER and **Philippe LAMBERTS**, Co-Chairs, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
Gabriele ZIMMER, Chair, Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left

13 November, 2018

Dear President,

Subject: Prioritising health in the next EU budget by re-establishing a robust, stand-alone Health Programme

As a group of patient and public health civil society organisations, representing many networks of European citizens expecting good health, we are writing to recommend that the European Parliament take a strong position on safeguarding the EU Health Programme in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework as an independent, stand-alone programme, with adequate political leadership and financial resources.

We are concerned by the European Commission's proposal to merge the EU Health Programme with an enlarged European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) chapter. Although it looks like an integrated approach and it is indeed important to address socio-economic determinants of health, in reality this merging means a loss of political leadership and further downgrade of the importance of EU health policy. The Commission proposal fails to guarantee leadership on health prevention and promotion, as required by the EU Treaties¹, as there is no guarantee that the protection of people's health will prevail and will be prioritised during the implementation of ESF+. With the current settings, the opposite scenario is the likely outcome.

On the operational side a health chapter in the MFF is both technically and legally feasible and easily can be done without compromising or delaying the MFF adoption procedure.

With the European and cross-border nature of today's health challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance, aging population, increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, infectious disease epidemics, to name only few, the EU convening role in health is crucial to efficiently address those challenges. No single country, no single government can tackle these cross-border health threats alone. European action on health prevention and promotion is therefore needed to complement member states' efforts as regards maintaining their national healthcare systems, respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the suggested health budget in ESF+ which also shows deprioritisation of citizen's health. Instead of accepting the proposed eight per cent decrease in health

¹ Article 3 TEU states that "the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people." Article 168(1) TFEU requires that "A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all" This 'mainstreaming' obligation can also be found in Article 114(3) TFEU, and has been further reinforced following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, by Article 9 TFEU and Article 35 of the EU Charter.

funding compared to the 2014-2020 period², more ambitious and reasonable funding is needed for the next Health Programme, as more priorities and activities will be needed for proper implementation, including the coordination and execution of the Health in All Policies' legal obligation.

People's health shall be a Big Thing. There is a key role for the EU to play in improving the health of European citizens which can be ensured only through a robust next-generation EU Health Programme. With the upcoming European elections, health should move to the top of the EU's agenda to ensure the EU can realise its commitment to achieve the health targets of Sustainable Development Goals. Strong leadership on health will also resonate with European citizens and bring the EU closer to them.

Latest surveys - including the European Parliament's own survey - indicate that people expect more European action on health.³ The European Parliament, directly representing European citizens in the EU, should ensure that their voice is heard and their concerns are addressed. The Parliament should leave a healthy legacy for future generations by safeguarding a reinforced future Health Programme.

***Prepared by:* Global Health Advocates and European Public Health Alliance**

Supported by:

AFEW Network

AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) - Europe

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AIDS Action Europe

ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS (Romania)

AS - Center for the Empowerment Youth of people who are living with HIV and AIDS (Serbia)

Association HOPS - Healthy Options Project Skopje (Macedonia)

Association ŠKUC (Slovenia)

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European Network for Tobacco and Smoking Prevention (ENSP)

European Public Health Association (EUPHA)

Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos - GAT) (Portugal)

Health Action International (HAI)

HIV Ireland

² The proposed budget for Health strand in European Social Fund+ is €413 million while the current Health Programme has a budget of €449.4 million

³ Public Opinion, European Commission, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2143>.

Would you like the EU to intervene less than at present or more than at present for the following policy areas? European Parliament, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/external/html/eurobarometer-052017/default_en.htm.

International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)

Labyrinth (Kosovo)

LILA - Italian League for Fighting AIDS (Italy)

Positiiviset ry, HIV (Finland)

Rights Reporter Foundation (RRF)

Smoke Free Partnership

Stop Overdose Now Network (SONNET)

TB Europe Coalition (TBEC)

UNAD - La Red de Atención a las Adicciones (Spain)