



**JOINT LETTER BY EPHA AND EPF
in the context of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework**

The European Public Health Alliance (**EPHA**)

The European Patients' Forum (**EPF**)

The Future EU Public Health Programme

We are writing on behalf of the European Public Health Alliance and the European Patients' Forum in regard to adequately financing the future Public Health Programme, part of the next Multi-annual Financial Framework.

EPHA – Europe's leading NGO advocating for better health – is the European Platform bringing together public health organisations representing professional groups, patients, health promotion and disease specific NGOs and other health associations.

EPF is the collective patients' voice at EU level, currently representing 50 member organisations which are chronic disease-specific patient organisations active at European level, and national coalitions of patient organisations. Collectively, they reflect the voice of over 150 million patients living with various chronic diseases in the European Union.

The Public Health Programme contributes to protecting and promoting the health of Europeans. Under Article 168 of the Treaty, Union action in the field of health complements and supports national policies and is directed towards improving public health. The added value of European cooperation in this field is being increasingly recognised by Member States, and the Health Programme is a crucial tool to support and further encourage this cooperation.

Under the Programme, funding was made available to over 300 projects, some of which would otherwise not have happened, for example capacity building for health improvement in new Member States¹. The Third Programme for EU Action on Public Health will build on a twenty-year long experience of EU action on Public Health; it will complement the EU's overarching economic strategy and will give concrete tools to the EU to implement the Lisbon Treaty, building on past successes, addressing gaps and failures, and finding innovative ways to address today's growing health challenges, not least of which is an aging European population..

¹ For more information on the Public Health Programme, please see the European Health Policy Forum's "Opinion to the EU institutions concerning the Report of the Court of Auditors on the First EU Public Health Programme" available at http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/docs/opinion_institutions_en.pdf

Therefore the health community calls for a strong commitment to protect people's` interests by not reducing the budget for the health and consumer portfolio and on the contrary to increase it, in order to respond to the crucial challenges in the field.

Public Health is key for reaching the goals of EU 2020

Health policy is an area that adds value to people's lives and is crucial to the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Constituting 10% of EU GDP, the health sector has considerable potential for innovation, and has an important role to play in meeting societal challenges and expectations.

The continued funding of public health budget lines, and more specifically the Public Health Programme, will demonstrate the commitment of the European Union to addressing the main concerns of people living in Europe and ensure better health for them. Healthy Europeans create, find and keep jobs, are more productive, and cope better with insecurity and stress. A healthy population is essential for economic growth and recovery².

Thus, the Public Health Programme is crucial to reaching the goal of smart, sustainable, inclusive growth, and implementing the goal set by the European Platform on Poverty of lifting 20 million Europeans out of poverty. Recognising this, on 7 June 2011, the Council called for the health sector to play a key role in the implementation of the EU2020 strategy.

Health impacts several economic outcomes important to Europe 2020 such as wages, work hours, labour force participation, early retirement, ability to work for those caring for an ill member of the household,, educational outcomes (good health in childhood reduces school absenteeism and early drop-out rates), poverty reduction (people with chronic illnesses and permanent disabilities suffer more from poverty), and income levels.

In addition, the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-2013 highlighted the role of a healthy workforce in generating economic wealth and prosperity. For the Europe 2020 Strategy to succeed in employing 75% of the active population, health policy focused on maintaining high levels of good health in the population is crucial. In the future, the EU budget should address the demographic challenge of an ageing population, and the EU will need an adequate supply of health professionals. The Public Health Programme therefore also has strong potential to reinforce the flagship initiative on "New Skills for New Jobs."

The "Innovation Union", the "Digital Agenda", the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing and the future Strategic Common Research Framework will all benefit from a strong Public Health Programme. These initiatives seek to identify innovative ways to improve people's lives, particularly as eHealth is increasing high on the EU agenda. eHealth solutions can bring many potential benefits to health systems, the health workforce and patients, including better transfer of medical data, improved patient mobility, provision of healthcare at home and in remote areas, information on leading healthy lifestyles, and increased patient safety. They can also encourage more personalised health care, improve the quality and continuity of chronic disease management and quality of life, and support empowered patients to participate fully in employment and society.

In the long-term, innovative solutions including eHealth can result in significant budget savings and so improve the sustainability of health systems. The Public Health Programme can contribute to developing an evidence base for public health interventions, eHealth technologies and the Innovation Partnership.

² For more information on the link between economic recovery and health, see the European Health Policy Forum input into the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is available at http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/docs/euhpf_consultation2020_en.pdf

Healthy Europeans for a healthy economy

A healthy European population is a cornerstone for economic success in today's competitive world, particularly when it is now necessary for people to lead longer working lives.. As shown by the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health³, health is not a by-product of economic growth but one of the key factors for economic development and quality employment. Good health contributes to better overall outcomes in productivity. Moreover, investment in health promotion, disease/injury prevention and health services act as a driver for wealth and development.

By the same token, not having the proper facilities to improve the health of populations, to prevent and treat disease/injury, and to reintegrate people who experienced poor health back into the labour market poses an obstacle to economic prosperity. Research conducted by the WHO and EU funded projects such as Health ClusterNet⁴ highlight that investment in better health also contributes significantly to economic growth in deprived communities. The European Commission document, 'The Contribution of Health to the Economy in the European Union,' emphasised the role of health and healthcare "in generating social cohesion, a productive workforce, employment and hence economic growth."

Tackling Societal Challenges with the Public Health Programme

Europe faces several new health, social and environmental challenges: an ageing population, changing needs and expectations of people living in Europe and patients, increasing chronic diseases and costs of healthcare, injuries and permanent disabilities, climate change, social exclusion and growing inequalities, deterioration of working conditions, downgrading of social protection systems, and inadequate care infrastructures. Health concerns such as pandemics or obesity and an ageing population are common to all Member States, and could compromise the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

This represents the possibility to consider the budgetary implications of the new challenges. To respond to the challenges, we need smart and responsible innovation to balance future demands and resources, and to re-vision the health sector as a major contributor to economic growth and the EU population's well-being.

The Health Programme brings Europeans added value as it supports the Union's ability to pro-actively face these challenges. The next Multi-annual Financial Framework is an opportunity to realign spending priorities with the needs and preferences of people living in Europe. When looking at EU citizens' priorities, Eurobarometer surveys consistently show that health is one of the most important issues for people living in Europe. Health policy is thus a key area for the EU to add value to people's lives by demonstrating that it is addressing their real needs.

In particular, to address effectively the challenge of ageing and chronic diseases, a multi-pronged approach is needed that encompasses prevention, health promotion and patient-centred disease management in line with the overarching values of universality, access to good quality care, equity and solidarity.⁵ There is an urgent need to find innovative ways to deliver integrated, high-quality, patient-centred care that will be sustainable in the long run and enable patients with chronic diseases to maximise their quality of life and autonomy, thus enabling them to be fully productive members of society.

³ DG SANCO, "The contribution of health to the economy in the European Union." 2005. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_overview/documents/health_economy_en.pdf

⁴ Health ClusterNET is a non-profit interregional organisation owned by its member regions. <http://www.healthclusternet.org/>

⁵ Council conclusions on the common values and principles in EU health systems, 2 June 2006.

It is therefore instrumental for the Europe 2020 Strategy's success to have a fully functioning and well-funded Public Health Programme.

Added value of supporting civil society

The European Union is diverse in its structure, and all sectors of society have to be considered for the next Multi-annual Financial Framework, in particular the third sector. Civil Society Organisations have first-hand knowledge of the most pressing societal needs and can help identify those important but often ignored social and health problems. For several marginalised groups their involvement needs to be strengthened in order to ensure that EU action will benefit society. Civil society plays an important role in giving a voice to the concerns of people and delivering services that meet their needs. The Public Health Programme is crucial to get them more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives, and to offer them a structured channel to be involved in the policy process.

This specific role of civil society organisations in the EU policy process has grown hugely over the last decades and is closely linked to the fundamental right of people to form associations in order to pursue a common purpose, as highlighted in Article 12 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights referred to as civil dialogue. The involvement of civil society in EU policies has brought much added value to people's lives, through ensuring that EU policies meet their needs and concerns. The experience and expertise of public health and patient organisations are particularly important in supporting policies and programmes on prevention and disease management, ensuring they are targeted effectively to reflect real needs and preferences of patients.

Civil society participation enhances the legitimacy, transparency and equity of policy and decision-making, ensuring that it takes into consideration the interests of all sectors of society.

For the above reasons funding mechanisms, such as PROGRESS, LIFE Programme and the Citizenship Programme, which facilitate civil society participation, should be included in the proposal of the next Multi-annual Financial Framework. In addition, adequate funding should be allocated through the Public Health Programme to enable a meaningful participation of patient and public health organisations.

An EU budget based on common EU values

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) is a member of the EU Civil Society Contact Group (EUCSCG), which gathers several European platforms of public interest organisations from different sectors. The group has developed a response to the Budget Review⁶, which highlights principles which should form the basis of the EU budget:

- The future EU budget should be transparent and the process should be accountable – an evaluation mechanism should be put in place.
- The process of public budgeting needs to allow for meaningful participation of civil society.
- EU money is public money and it must serve the European public interest.
- The concept of European Added Value as defined in the Budget Review Communication, does not address the question of what the European public interest is. When looking at EU added value, the EU's own fundamental values and the priorities of people should act as a guide, and EU funds should be reoriented towards social objectives, including increasing equity and promoting the wellbeing of all people living in Europe.

⁶ The CSCG Response to the Budget Review and MAFF is available at:
http://www.ephah.org/IMG/pdf/cscg_statement_on_budget_review_and_mff_final.pdf

- The future EU budget and priorities of the EU match the values enshrined in the EU Treaties such as “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities⁷” and benefit the well-being of all people living in Europe. In the current Treaty on European Union solidarity between people is a core value.
- The EU budget should be leading us towards our overall goals, and meet our most pressing challenges.
- EU funds should respect the principle of solidarity and sustainable development must be the overarching goal of a new EU budget.

The Europe 2020 Strategy on its own cannot deliver the ambitious objectives that Heads of States and governments, the Commission and the European Parliament have set for the European Union. It will require other programmes to work together, including a strong Public Health Programme, in order to achieve Europe’s full potential for prosperity, solidarity and security.

Bold decisions can lead Europe through today’s biggest challenges and give the generation to come vision for the future. Challenges bring opportunities, the opportunity of the budget negotiation is to seize the moment and create a more sustainable Europe that itself sustains and is sustained by a healthy population. The EU budget has a role in promoting European objectives of equity, social justice and wellbeing and by investing in health it can support the EU reaching its full potential. At this decisive time the public health community and people living in Europe look for courageous leadership to take action on prioritising and championing the health of people. The public health community and civil society offer their support and collaboration during the future negotiations in designing, implementing and monitoring the future Public Health Programme.



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⁷ Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, “**The Values of the Union**”.