

OPEN LETTER

To: European Commission Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides

CC:

European Parliament President David Sassoli

European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) – Director General Ms Sandra Gallina

European Health and Digital Executive Agency – Interim Director Mr Matthew Hudson

European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) – Head of EU4Health Task Force Mr Adrian Peres

2 June 2021

RE: Open Letter from Members of the European Parliament and NGOs to the EU Commission - The importance of operating grants for civil society organisations in the field of health

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

The EU4Health programme, which entered into force on 26 March 2021, represents a welcome and unique opportunity to build stronger, better resourced, and more resilient health systems. The Programme will address many crucial issues that will lead to a stronger EU action in the field of health and represents a key pillar towards a true European Health Union bringing real added value for all Europeans.

However, as we await the release of the first Work Programme, we are deeply concerned about a clear gap in terms of concrete support to civil society organisations through operating grants.

Health civil society organisations play a crucial role at many levels. They are a vital partner to both European and National institutions to shape and implement public health strategies and policies.

Civil society organisations are essential in bridging the gap between policymaking and the communities they represent in a professional, efficient, and democratic manner. This was made even more apparent during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society organisations were able to rapidly adapt to the situation, dedicating expertise, and capacity to help policymakers in developing and communicating their pandemic response strategies to the public, while feeding back essential information for better decisions based on people's diverse needs and concerns.

It is only through their core operational activities that civil society organisations can carry out this fundamental work and operating grants in the past have consistently demonstrated their significant added value.

To our knowledge, the 2021 Work Programme will not foresee a specific budget allocation to operating grants for CSOs. As the current operating grants framework will come to an end this year, this would create a major gap that would strongly hinder the sustainability of many civil society organisations, hampering their capacity to deliver in a timely and independent way on their essential role as partners in EU health policymaking. We are concerned to see the European Commission taking this step backwards only in the area of health, in the middle of a health crisis.

We therefore urgently call the European Commission to **revise its position on operating grants in the field of health**, starting with the 2021 EU4Health Work Programme and moving towards a **stronger commitment in years to come, building on the larger budget available, the current Regulation and a workable, accountable approach to effective use of resources**. As similar mechanisms are still active for European organisations active in other fields, such as social policies (e.g., disability and non-discrimination) or environment, it is essential that the EU does not forget health.

As highlighted by the European Parliament in its work on the EU4Health proposal, with an EU that is looking at developing an even stronger collaboration and action in the field of health, from EU4Health to the European Health Union and the Conference on the Future of Europe, **health civil society organisations must be recognised and supported** as an integral part of EU health policy development and implementation.

Sincerely,

**Alex Agius Saliba
MEP**

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Malta)

Marc Angel MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Luxembourg)

Margrete Auken MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Denmark)

**Pernando BARRENA
ARZA MEP**

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Spain)

Milan BRGLEZ MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Slovenia)

Cristian Busoi MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Romania)

Brando Benifei MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Italy)

Biljana Borzan MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Croatia)

Sara Cerdas MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Portugal)

Olivier Chastel MEP

Renew Europe Group (Belgium)

Deirdre Clune MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Ireland)

Josianne Cutajar MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Malta)

Pascal Durand MEP

Renew Europe Group (France)

Eleonora Evi MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Italy)

Loucas Fourlas MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Cyprus)

Romeo Franz MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Germany)

Klemens Grošelj MEP

Renew Europe Group (Slovenia)

José Gusmão MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Portugal)

Lukasz Kohut MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Poland)

Petros Kokkalis MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Greece)

Kateřina Konečná MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Czechia)

Marian-Jean Marinescu MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Romania)

Dimitris Papadimoulis MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Greece)

Peter Pollák MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Slovakia)

Manuela Ripa MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Germany)

Veronique Trillet-Lenoir MEP

Renew Europe Group (France)

Sarah Wiener MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Austria)

Milan Zver MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Slovenia)

Heidi Hautala MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Finland)

Stelios Kouloglou MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Greece)

Tilly Metz MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Luxembourg)

Piernicola Pedicini MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Italy)

Samira Rafaela MEP

Renew Europe Group (Netherlands)

Dominique Riquet MEP

Renew Europe Group (France)

István Ujhelyi MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Hungary)

Isabel Wiseler-Lima MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Luxembourg)

Alviina Alametsä MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Finland)

Roberta Metsola MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Malta)

Andrey Kovatchev MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Bulgaria)

Radka Maxová MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Czechia)

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Ireland)

Sira Rego MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Spain)

Michèle Rivasi MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (France)

Hilde Vautmans MEP

Renew Europe Group (Belgium)

Tiemo Wölken MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Germany)

Charles Goerens MEP

Renew Europe Group (Luxembourg)

Seán Kelly MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Ireland)

David Lega MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Sweden)

Cláudia Monteiro De Aguiar MEP

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (Portugal)

Manu Pineda MEP

The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (Spain)

Frederique Ries MEP

Renew Europe Group (Belgium)

Mounir Satouri MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (France)

Maria Walsh MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Ireland)

Chrysoula Zacharopoulou MEP

Renew Europe Group (France)

Christophe Hansen MEP

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (Luxembourg)

Ernest Urtasun MEP

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Spain)

Civil Society Organisations

