

Brussels, 9 October 2020

Dear Minister,
Dear Secretary of State,
Dear Ambassador,

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted, once again, that patients should be involved in shaping health policy at national and European levels, and why their unique knowledge and expertise, collectively and individually, are vital. The EU4Health programme represents a unique opportunity to act on this, whilst enhancing European coordination to protect our health.¹ EPF is concerned, however, that the direction Council discussions are taking currently may jeopardise this important progress.

In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the imperative towards enhanced European collaboration to ensure our health systems emerge from it stronger, more prepared and more people-centred is a positive outcome, welcomed by the European public and patients alike. We believe this is a move in the right direction as health is not only a national matter – it is an urgent European and global health policy priority.²

We welcome your acknowledgement, as policy makers, that the public is now more attuned to the need for sufficient funding for public health, as well as the need for a stronger collective role for Member States in tackling public health issues.

The standalone EU4Health programme as proposed by the European Commission, is an important recognition of this need to invest in Europe's health.

We believe that ambition for the programme must be upheld and ask the European Council to award more funds to the EU4Health programme and reconsider the decision to drastically cut funds from the EU4Health programme.³

Europe needs a robust, forward-looking health programme which addresses not only cross-border health threats, but the formidable challenges posed by chronic diseases and persisting health inequalities that risk to be exacerbated by the current economic crisis.⁴ We ask Member States to uphold ambition and scope for the health programme and seize this opportunity to collectively do more on health, delivering on expectations clearly voiced by citizens and patients.

We also believe that to achieve its objectives and to ensure efficient use of the assigned budget, the EU4Health programme should foresee a solid and inclusive, and clear governance framework to effectively manage and monitor the implementation of the programme and ensure its positive impact on European citizens and patients.⁵ Such a framework should facilitate transparent and evidence-based design of annual work plans that allow the programme's priorities to be in line with the needs and

¹ <https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/statement---epf-proposes-progressive-patient-centred-eu4health-programme-15.09.2020.pdf>

² <https://www.eu-patient.eu/COVID-19/epf-covid-statements/epf-statement-on-the-covid-19-pandemic2/>

³ <https://eu4health.eu/eu-health-organisations-react-to-cuts-in-eu-health-programme/>

⁴ <https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/library/epf-statement---high-time-for-enhanced-european-coordination-and-competence-on-health.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/statement---epf-proposes-progressive-patient-centred-eu4health-programme-15.09.2020.pdf>

expectations of citizens and patients. To accomplish this, there is need for a clear and meaningful civil society role in the governance of the programme.

The involvement of civil society and patients' organisations in a EU4Health Steering Board will enable stakeholders which are directly involved in the implementation, but also the monitoring and evaluation of both the programme itself, and European legislation, to provide their input on the concrete actions needed to materialise the broad objectives defined by the EU4Health programme legislative framework. To enable them to play this role effectively, coproduction should be built into all EU-level health-related initiatives along with sustainable resources for financial support to NGOs.

We therefore ask Member States to uphold the European Parliament proposal of an EU4Health Steering Board with participation of civil society.

A programme which promotes strong civil society involvement will be welcomed by EU citizens, whose trust needs to be restored. Patient organisations are vital stakeholders in future policy discussions, and together with our 75 national and European members, we are fully committed to working with Member States and the EU institutions on defining a new and improved way forward.

On behalf of patient organisations and communities through Europe, representing more than 150 million patients living with chronic conditions, we count on you to consider our concerns as well as our proposals in continued negotiations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marco Greco', written in a cursive style.

Marco Greco
President
European Patients' Forum (EPF)

To: Heads and Health Attachés of Permanent Representations of the Member States
Cc. Commissioner for Health Ms Stella Kyriakides

Contact: katie.gallagher@eu-patient.eu

The European Patients' Forum (EPF) is an umbrella organisation of patient organisations across Europe and across disease-areas. Our 75 members include disease-specific patient groups active at EU level and national coalitions of patients. www.eu-patient.eu