

Need for more solidarity and coordinated EU action to tackle COVID-19

Europe remains at the epicentre of the COVID-19 crisis. No single European country is immune to the devastating consequences of this virus. Responding to the challenges of the pandemic thus requires a pan-European approach. Our health is too important. No one country, no one sector can deal with the health, social and economic impact of COVID-19 on their own. It requires a cross-border, coordinated, collaborative response from across the European Union, but also with other regions of the world.

That means more solidarity in Europe. We need a Europe that:

- Plans and works in unity to ensure that a similar public health crisis never again impacts EU Member States in such a profound way
- Translates the concept of solidarity, enshrined in the treaties, into concrete measures
- Has a clear role in financing, providing expertise, and supporting health system reforms and innovations based on the learnings from the current crisis
- Strengthens Member States and the EU ability to monitor and assess the performance of health and social care systems and the capacity to prepare for and manage ongoing and future health challenges and threats
- Invests into prevention and preparedness to optimise the public health response to serious cross-border threats to human health, as well as crisis management
- Identifies and disseminates best practices in healthcare professionals' action and patient pathways, and promotes stronger exchange of knowledge on our health and care systems
- Builds its own health future through an ambitious industrial healthcare strategy that will secure research, innovation, production and distribution of essential healthcare products and services in Europe and will reduce its dependence on raw materials and key equipment from outside of Europe
- Leads the international community to coordinate the necessary contingency plans to prepare for the consequences of infectious diseases and pandemics

As a Coalition of 34 organisations working on health, patients and the sustainability of healthcare systems are at the core of what we do. We welcome the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative put forward by the European Commission, which will provide 37 billion Euros of investment under cohesion policy to address the consequences of this public health crisis. We also welcome the proposal to extend the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund to provide assistance to the hardest hit Member States, up to 800 million Euros will be available in 2020. ***Solidarity in action.***

Solidarity across Europe, breaking down silos across sectors

This crisis has shown us the importance of cooperation between all sectors and actors to ensure our healthcare systems can function to their best ability in saving human lives. Collaboration on the ground is critical and it is in line with our Coalition spirit. That means working together to:

- ***Protect the most vulnerable groups:*** older patients or those suffering from other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, heart and respiratory diseases, obesity, hypertension, immune disorders have a higher risk of COVID-19 complication and death. Across Europe, 150 million people live with a chronic condition, and some 50 million with multimorbidity.
- ***Promote health literacy:*** this will empower citizens to take responsible actions in prevention, self-management and self-care, as well as in following public health warnings and measures. Education should also focus on promoting healthy and hygienic behaviour adoption, which is attentive to the different attitudes of men and women.

- **Support and protect our health professionals and critical workers:** ensuring that those in front line against COVID-19 have the equipment, tools, time and resources they need to continue to appropriately advise, treat and save lives with their dedication, commitment and skill.
- **Ensure the supply of health technologies:** we observe important shortages of critical products. Thus, we welcome the Commission guidelines that underline the importance of the free circulation of goods across the EU, especially when it comes to medicines, medical devices and other health technologies. We should not forget patients in desperate need of life-saving equipment and treatments.
- **Find new diagnostics, treatments, medical technologies and vaccines:** we need a Europe that is able to foster accessible and affordable innovation for COVID-19. Being prepared for future health threats to our continent and citizens means building a long-term research ecosystem and stimulating interdisciplinary synergies in Europe, as well as taking the lead in promoting international collaborations with other parts of the world.
- **Make swift progress on the EU Health Data Space:** there is an urgent need for a trusted and secure platform to leverage the use and sharing of health data within and across the EU Member States to gain greater insights in prevention, detection and treatment of COVID-19.
- **Support in dealing with the consequences of COVID-19:** healthcare, social and economic policies that help that European society at large in the aftermath of the crisis should be identified and promoted.

Learn the lessons of COVID-19 together. During and after this crisis we will learn lessons together on prevention, preparedness, cross-border cooperation, health system responsiveness and resilience, political leadership, an innovative environment in Europe, and the importance of a healthy population to a healthy economy. We will also learn from the work between the EU institutions and the national governments in order to maximise collaboration and solidarity. We will take these learnings on board in our future activities and reflect on the impact they have on our recommendations.

Background information:

The EU Health Coalition was created after the first ever EU Health Summit, which took place in November 2018, in order to promote a shared vision of health in Europe, based on jointly developed recommendations. The purpose is to ensure health remains high on Europe's political agenda and bring the necessary changes to address the unprecedented challenges driven by an ageing population and the increased prevalence of chronic diseases that healthcare systems and citizens across Europe are facing. The EU Health Coalition is composed of patient organisations, EU research-oriented medical societies, industry organisations, providers, regional and local health authorities and other relevant stakeholders that share a common vision for health. To find out more about the work of the EU Health Coalition please visit our website [here](#).

