EVENT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The second edition of the EU Health Summit "Time for Action" (26 October 2020) sought to put forward an action plan to implement 10 recommendations jointly developed by the 33 EU Health Coalition partners.
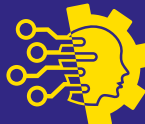
Over 600 participants, together with thought leaders from the healthcare landscape, including Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, German Health Minister Jens Spahn and Andrea Ammon, Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), discussed concrete actions to be implemented at regional, national and EU level.

Throughout the Summit, particular attention was paid to the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic and how to translate these into a political vision capable of maximising collaboration and ensuring a healthy and equitable future for everyone in Europe.

The 2020 EU Health Summit was a catalyst that enabled participants to reach a common understanding of the collaborative and concrete actions that all parties should take to improve Europeans' health and sustainability in health systems going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SHARED VISION OF HEALTH IN EUROPE

In preparation of the EU Health Summit, the 33 partners of the EU Health Coalition put together 10 concrete recommendations towards a shared vision for the future of health in Europe, outlining how the EU could lead in areas such as healthcare systems, policies for health, research and innovation as well as health data and digital health.

1.
Support the measurement and collection of standardised health data, including outcomes relevant for people and patients, throughout European health systems

2.
Establish a forum for better access to health innovation

3.
Facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships with regions and cities

4.
Ensure effective EU health coordination and leadership at high level

5.
Invest in Europe as a true research and innovation hub

6.
Coordinate research efforts across Europe to be able to jointly tackle emerging complex health challenges

7.
Ensure greater flexibility to support translational research

8.
Accelerate the creation of a European health data space

9.
Ensure ehealth interoperability across the continuum of care

10.
Establish an ethical framework for artificial intelligence that is both flexible and specific to the healthcare sector

The Summit was successful in enabling a structured discussion among a wide range of stakeholders on the 10 recommendations listed above. Following the discussions, debates and sharing of experiences, it was possible to define concrete political actions that should be carried out in Europe in order to implement the recommendations.

REAL CHANGE HAPPENS IN PARTNERSHIP

STELLA KYRIAKIDES – European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety,
kicked off the EU Health Summit by highlighting that while there is a will to build stronger health systems, enhanced collaboration is required at all levels of action: "Ever closer cooperation, coordination and unity of purpose across Europe is what we need to tackle the pandemic, to develop resilient, equitable health systems, and to build healthy communities".

JENS SPAHN– German Minister for Health,
stressed the importance for all Member States to join efforts to combat the COVID-19 crisis. He shared that the manufacturing of medicines in Europe, the establishment of a European Health Data Space, and an enhanced mandate for the ECDC are key objectives for the German Council Presidency. "Only by working together that real change can be made".

POLICIES FOR HEALTH

During the session moderated by Nick Batey (EUREGHA Chair), the participants agreed that it will be essential for the EU to provide adequate Union-wide coordination and leadership in health in the coming years, as such an approach is essential to tackling inequalities across Member States. Ms Paola Testori Coggi, Special Advisor at the National Technological Cluster on Life Sciences (ALISEI), highlighted that cross-border health threats demonstrate that the EU needs a greater role in shaping health policies and should have shared competence in this area.

Local and regional authorities must also be involved in all actions, as all levels can learn from each other. The EU should therefore provide adequate organisational means and resources and work with regions to ensure a harmonised coordination. Ms Coggi and Mr Normunds Popens, Deputy Director-General for Regional Policy at the European Commission, agreed that more coordination among Member States should be established through the existing legal framework to unblock all available opportunities. Referring to the recommendations of the EU Health Coalition, Mr Popens also stressed that inter-regional coordination should be a long-term priority.

In light of the recent challenges related to COVID-19, international coordination, cross-border data sharing and an overarching common European Strategy could be welcome solutions for the current EU health landscape.

DIGITAL HEALTH & HEALTH DATA

In a session moderated by Nicole Denjoy (COCIR Secretary General), participants concluded that a clear data governance framework including common data classification must be developed to set up a European Health Data Space. It is of vital importance that the financial means for this purpose are guaranteed within the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

To enhance data interoperability, cross-border electronic health care should be made possible, through corresponding national strategies and action plans.

When it comes to artificial intelligence, trust is crucial. Its development must be supported by solid data governance from public authorities, the establishment of a structured multi-stakeholder dialogue as well as a strong EU regulatory framework.

HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

During the session, Jacqueline Bowman-Busato (EU Policy Lead at EASO), stressed how COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerability of our healthcare systems, especially in terms of care delivery, inequalities, responsiveness and resilience. The crisis offers the opportunity for further reforms that support the EU playing an important role in ensuring a healthy and equitable future for everyone in Europe.

The measurement and collection of standardised health data, including outcomes relevant for people and patients, would lead to smart spending in healthcare and strengthen European health systems by allowing for transparent comparisons and benchmarking across the EU; real-time disease monitoring and risk assessments; identification and exchange of best practices in health and social care; and strengthening the assessment of health and social care systems performance. Member of the European Parliament, Nicolae Stefanuta encouraged participants to stop seeing health spending as a cost only but rather as an investment, and prevent health budgets from being cut in the aftermath of the pandemic economic crisis. "Because health is wealth".

A European Outcomes Observatory for the collection and analysis of health outcomes should be set up to enhance the collaboration across local, regional, national and EU levels. Melitta Jakab, Senior Health Economist at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, further pointed out that the World Health Organisation is ready to collaborate on such an initiative supporting the measurement and collection of standardised data throughout Europe.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Wilfried Ellmeier (Biomedical Alliance in Europe President) led the breakout session on research and innovation. Discussions highlighted that European support, coordination, and cooperation in health research are key.

During the session, Professor Martin Landray of the European Society of Cardiology explained the impact that COVID-19 is having on clinical trials and the need for increased regulatory flexibility, collaboration and multidisciplinary efforts to ensure their continuation. Doctor Cristina Bescos of the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT Health) emphasised that the EU lags behind on innovation compared to its main competitors. As such, increased international cooperation and new business models are key to successfully transform research and innovation. Finally, Sabrina Montante of the National Institute of Health in Italy (ISS) also underlined that European coordination is necessary to avoid duplication of efforts. She warned against the fragmentation of the different funds and of the need to better communicate the impact of scientific research towards the policy making community.

Professor Ellmeier pointed out that there are exciting EU policy instruments such as Horizon Europe, the EU4Health Programme, the pharmaceutical strategy or the newly proposed European Biomedical Research and Development Agency that should contribute to the creation of a long-term ecosystem and ensure that Europe is a true research and innovation hub.

ISIDRO LASO BALLESTEROS – Cabinet Expert of Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Education, Culture and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, commented that the five research and innovation missions of the Horizon Europe framework programme, and especially the Cancer Mission, are crucial mechanisms proposed by the European Commission to scale up dialogues and establish partnerships between researchers, the industry, the Commission, and all civil societies across Europe.

CREATE SYNERGIES with OTHER RESEARCH and INNOVATION Programs

Continue and Scale Up PUBLIC & PRIVATE Partnerships

All Stakeholders to be part of Co Design Process

Isidro Laso Ballesteros
Cabinet Expert at Commissioner Gabriel cabinet for Innovation, Research, Education, Culture and Youth, at European Commission.

TALENT is a HEALTH Priority

DATA SHARING is very important

A STRONGER EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION AFTER COVID-19

The final high-level panel discussion featured **Dolors Montserrat** - Member of the European Parliament, **Despina Spanou** - Head of Cabinet for Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas, **Nicola Bedlington** - Special Advisor of the European Patients Forum, EPF and **Rui Santos Ivo** - President of the National Authority of Medicines and Health Products of Portugal, INFARMED.

The various implications of the COVID-19 crisis for the EU and its Member States were discussed. Panellists agreed that European collaboration on health must be strengthened and that the lessons learnt from the pandemic must be reflected in policy decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of investing in EU-wide research and of EU-wide collaboration. It was also emphasised that in order to ensure equal access to high-quality care, citizens and patients should be placed at the centre of the decision-making process. To support this idea, a Multistakeholder Forum for Better Access to Health Innovation was notably proposed by the EU Health Coalition and welcomed by speakers.

Ms Spanou concluded the discussion by saying that the EU can no longer play a minor role in health and the functioning of healthcare systems. Cross-border cooperation must be reinforced in the form of establishing a European Health Union.

ANDREA AMMON - Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), explained that the collection, the analysis and the assimilation of health data are at the heart of ECDC's work. During the recent months, the ECDC has managed to establish standardised reporting and comparability across the EU as a first step.

The current pandemic has shown the need for transforming the ways health data is collected, analysed and applied. Currently, pilot studies are planned that will help understand what requirements are needed to perform EU disease surveillance using electronic health care data.

ECDC sees it as its task to support Member States in making the transition to adapt to new technologies for improving public health, preparedness and response in the EU, in which digitalised and data-driven epidemiology will be key.

LOOKING AHEAD

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that serious public health threats know no borders, while exacerbating many of the existing, underlying problems of healthcare systems. Given the unprecedented situation we find ourselves in, the need for strengthened cooperation between countries and healthcare stakeholders in establishing a true European Health Union is fundamental.

The time for action is now. Collaboration between Member States, regions and local stakeholders will lead to better health outcomes in the EU and more resilient health systems, capable of tackling future health threats. By bringing together a wide range of stakeholders and having them engaged in discussions, the Summit proposed concrete actions through which the Coalition's recommendations can be translated into policy action.

Health now tops the European political agenda. We must not lose this momentum; investing in public health and healthcare systems will ensure that a similar health crisis will never impact European countries so profoundly again, while playing a vital role in stimulating the economic recovery of Europe.

Together, we are shaping the future of healthcare.

TIME
FOR
ACTION

ABOUT THE EU HEALTH COALITION

The EU Health Coalition was created following the first-ever EU Health Summit, in November 2018. The Coalition promotes a shared vision of health in Europe, based on jointly developed recommendations. The purpose is to ensure that health remains high on the political agenda and to champion the changes required to address the unprecedented challenges that an ageing population and an increasing prevalence of chronic diseases pose to healthcare systems and citizens.

The EU Health Coalition is composed of patient organisations, EU research-oriented medical societies, industry organisations, healthcare providers, regional and local health authorities and other relevant stakeholders, who all share a common vision. To find out more about the work of the EU Health Coalition, please visit our website here.