

STATEMENT

Shaping a European Health Union that delivers a new deal for patients and civil society

16 November 2020

The European Patients' Forum (EPF) **welcomes the 'EU Health Union' proposal package**, [presented on Wednesday 11 November by the European Commission](#). As highlighted in our statement '[High time for enhanced European coordination and competence on health](#)', the COVID-19 crisis has exposed known gaps and weaknesses and highlighted once again the importance of a **strong European public health policy** designed to meet the needs of Europeans, even beyond the pandemic crisis.

The proposal lays out important building blocks to enhance **European resilience towards future health crises**, increasing preparedness, surveillance, health systems monitoring and health emergency responsiveness. Furthermore, **reinforced transparency mandates for the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) and European Medicines Agency (EMA)** can lead to positive impacts on mitigating shortages and improving medicines and vaccines quality, effectiveness and safety.

In EPF's view, however, **the current proposal should be considered as a starting point to build better healthcare for the benefits of all Europeans**. The project for an impactful EU Health Union should go beyond crisis preparedness and cross-border threats. A true EU Health Union should be built on a broader framework, equipped with the right resources and instruments to address **systemic challenges such as access to quality care, inequalities, healthcare digitalisation and tackle non-communicable and communicable diseases alike**. Civil society organisations should be welcomed as partners in shaping Europe's new health agenda. To enable them to play this role effectively and independently, **co-production** should be built into all EU-level health-related initiatives.

EPF will closely follow the developments on the Commission's proposals and will also contribute, in consultation with our members, to the Conference on the Future of Europe to ensure that the patient community's voice is heard on this crucial debate.

As mentioned by Commissioner Kyriakides *"2020 will forever be remembered as the year the worst global health crisis in modern times broke out, but I would also like it to be remembered as the year where we listened and lived up to citizens' demands for more Europe in the area of public health"*.

The EU cannot miss the opportunity to learn from the COVID-19 crisis and listen to European citizens and patients to build a European Health Union founded on their needs.

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