

# MANIFESTO FOR A EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION

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## Preamble

In 2020, an invisible virus sweeps through Europe, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and many others with severe disability. Economic activity crashes, forcing governments to intervene in ways that were hitherto unimaginable.

This is not the last pandemic, and there are other urgent threats to health, including the effects of climate change, antimicrobial resistance, and rising inequalities. We cannot continue with life as before. We have to safeguard our societies but in ways that are proportionate to the dangers which threaten them. We must welcome the clear statement by the European Commission President Dr Ursula von der Leyen in her September 2020 “State of the Union” address, setting out the necessity to create a stronger European Health Union (EHU), building on recent efforts by the European Commission to take action on cross border health threats.

Through our governments of the European Union’s Member States, in successive Treaties, we have committed to a high level of human health protection.<sup>1</sup> In the Charter of Fundamental Rights, we have committed to the principles of equality, dignity, and solidarity.<sup>2</sup> In the Sustainable Development Goals, we have committed to a sustainable future for all. Through our governments as members, we are signed on to the Constitution of the World Health Organization. However, these safeguards for health are not, on their own, sufficient.

***We, as European citizens, call on our political leaders, meeting in the European Council, to take the next step, to commit to creating a true European Health Union.***

## Goals

A European Health Union will:

- a) Strive for the health and wellbeing of all Europeans, with no one left behind;
- b) Strengthen **solidarity** within and among Member States, based on the principle of progressive universalism, providing support, including universal health coverage, for all, but with particular attention to the needs of those who are disadvantaged;
- c) Ensure **environmental sustainability**, by adopting the European Green Deal<sup>3</sup> and prioritising measures to promote One Health, the concept that links our health with that of the animals and plants with which we share this planet;
- d) Provide **security** for all Europeans, protecting them from the major threats to health and from the vulnerability that is created by living a precarious existence;
- e) Enable **everyone’s voice to be heard**, so that policies that affect their health are created with them and not for them.

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<sup>1</sup> Art 168 TFEU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12008E168>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

## Policies and other measures

These goals can be achieved in a number of ways:

- a) The status of **health policy** in the European Treaties will be strengthened, with provisions for a European Health Union incorporated into Articles 2 and 3 of a revised Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, giving the European Union explicit competence to take action on health policy;
- b) The **voice of the citizens of Europe**, expressed through their representatives in the European Parliament, will be heard more strongly;
- c) Recognising the cross-border nature of many threats to health, the **Health Threats** regulatory framework will be revised, including enhanced mechanisms to procure adequate supplies in emergencies, to enable the rapid publication of consistently defined EUROSTAT and health data, to strengthen the mechanisms for rapid generation of accurate and trusted evidence from research and practice, and to counter the threat from “fake news”;
- d) The European Union’s activities in **health research** will be expanded, with an enhanced health programme within Horizon Europe and measures to promote research collaboration across Europe;
- e) Recognising the importance of the **health workforce**, the European Union and the Member States will work together to address the unequal distribution of health workforce capacities in Europe, providing support to regions that have difficulties in attracting health workers as well as promoting the training and education of health professionals according to common standards, coupled with measures to safeguard the rights of health workers, including those from other parts of the world;
- f) Recognising the benefits of European collaboration on **rare diseases**, measures to support those who are affected by them will be strengthened;
- g) Recognising the global nature of many threats to health, the EU will develop a **Global Health Policy**, working with the UN and its specialised agencies, and especially a strengthened World Health Organization, and other multinational organisations contributing to health, to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

The following goals have been achieved:

- a) A stronger role for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) was adopted in November 2020 allowing the Agency to closely monitor and mitigate shortages of medicines and medical devices during major events and public health emergencies and facilitate faster approval of medicines which could treat or prevent a disease causing a public health crisis.
- b) A reinforced role for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) was agreed in November 2020. The revised ECDC mandate will allow the agency to take a stronger role in supporting the EU and its Member States in the prevention and control of disease threats and improve European preparedness for future health challenges;

- c) In September 2021 the Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) was launched as a new European Commission Directorate-General. Building upon HERA will strengthen the EU's health emergency response and preparedness.

## Principles

All health policies will be based on a series of principles:

- a) Priority to measures that deliver **wellbeing and longer and healthier lives** for all Europeans;
- b) **Precaution, proportionality, and dignity**, while also respecting **fundamental rights**, including equality on any grounds, including sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation of gender, ethnicity, or sexuality<sup>4</sup>;
- c) Respect for regional and national differences, both in the design and prioritisation of policies, taking account of differing contexts, and in their implementation, taking account of the principle of **subsidiarity**;
- d) **Solidarity** within and among Member States and with the rest of the world, with measures to safeguard their ability to deliver safe and effective health services. No one is safe until all are safe.

On 9 May 2020, Europe commemorated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Schuman Declaration that paved the way for the European Union. The history of Europe over seven decades demonstrates that major transformations are rarely fast or easy. Let us be inspired by the words of Robert Schuman: World health “...cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it”.

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<sup>4</sup> Art 21 Charter of Fundamental Rights