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Dear Mr Byrne,

**Re.: “*Enabling good health for all: a reflection process for a new EU health strategy*”**

The European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) would like to contribute to the reflection process on EU health policy that you launched on 15 July 2004.

We believe the European Commission has shown leadership by presenting the Working Paper “*Co-ordinated and integrated approach to combat HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in its neighbourhood*”.

As representatives of people living with HIV/AIDS and their advocates we ask our European leaders and the European Commission in particular to make the fight against HIV/AIDS a sustainable priority in their agenda. We invite them to **take strong, visible, and measurable commitments** to effectively address the **HIV/AIDS epidemic in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and on a global level**. By commitment, we mean measurable outcomes, deadlines & monitoring, and resources.

Emphasis must be put on the lessons from our successes in the past: what was accomplished in Western Europe and the USA holds a strong promise to also be successful in an enlarged EU and in neighbouring countries. Moreover, prevention and testing only work if one has something valid to offer: there can be **no positive outcome** (access to treatment, pension schemes, social care etc.) **without suppression of repressive or punitive measures** (criminalization, deportation, incarceration, stigma etc.)

**People are living with HIV/AIDS today: they have the right to be offered what amounts to the definition of good health that you gave i.e. “*a state of physical and mental well-being necessary to live a meaningful, pleasant and productive life*”, a life that includes work, care and a purpose to carry on.**

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We henceforth ask the commitment of EU Health Policy leaders to put words into action and undertake the following specific actions:

1. **Access** – To secure access to effective treatment and care of HIV infection and illnesses frequently seen in people with HIV, such as hepatitis C and tuberculosis, for all people with HIV living in Europe, regardless of their residential and legal status, including up-to-date diagnostic and monitoring tools.
2. **Rights** – To commit to a European-wide legislative and regulatory framework, reaffirming the social and civil rights of vulnerable individuals, and in particular to those aiming to eliminate all barriers impairing the full access of all people threatened by HIV, to uniform measures of prevention and treatment. This also applies to all travel and residency restrictions directed against persons living with HIV/AIDS.
3. **Inspiration** – To guarantee that all decisions, actions and resources deployed for the fight of HIV are dictated by scientific evidence and expertise rather than by ideological points of view and political motivations.
4. **PLWHA** – To guarantee the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and their advocates, and in particular representatives of vulnerable populations in all the phases of policy development, and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all activities related to HIV and associated infections.
5. **Vulnerable groups** – To ensure that needs-based activities are addressed to all groups vulnerable to HIV, such as: people who inject drugs, women, men who have sex with men, young people, prison inmates, migrants, sex workers and sexual partners of people living with HIV/AIDS.
6. **Harm-reduction** – To guarantee a European-wide access to evidence-based non judgemental harm reduction services. In the context of injecting drug use these must include: access to opiate substitution therapy, de-penalisation of drug use, availability of sterile injecting equipment and its safe disposal, peer outreach and objective information.
7. **Prevention** – To render interventions with documented efficacy in reducing the sexual transmission of HIV, widely available to all people living in Europe, including: strategic distribution of affordable condoms, education and empowerment of sex workers, effective and specific prevention campaigns targeted at young people and other vulnerable groups, safe conception services to individuals living with HIV and their sexual partners.
8. **Guidelines** – To develop and implement European evidence-based guidelines for the prevention, treatment and care of HIV and related infection, such as TB and viral hepatitis, and to ensure that all EU members respect the standards dictated by such guidelines.
9. **Funds** – To mobilise and commit funds in a measure that is adequate for realising and sustaining the above stated activities in the EU Member States.
10. **GFTAM** – To increase the financial contribution to the global fight against HIV/AIDS, by both implementing the Resolution of the European Parliament for an increase in the EU's financial contribution to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) to at least

one billion Euro per year on a sustained basis, and by mobilizing the funds potentially available through the European Development Fund for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

11. **Trade** – To contribute to the financial ability of low income states to confront the HIV-epidemic crisis by ensuring that no trade agreement negotiated by the European Union undermines the principles of the DOHA declaration and by supporting and pursuing a deeper and broader debt cancellation for all impoverished nations.
12. **WTO** – To encourage the early implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Decision of 30 August 2003 without further restriction or condition, in accordance with “*The Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia*”.
13. **Research** – To allocate sufficient funds to public and to public-private partnership research, in order to accelerate the development of safe, effective and affordable anti-HIV therapies, diagnostic tools, and preventive measures such as vaccines and microbicides.
14. **Co-ordination** – To appoint an EU HIV/AIDS Ambassador with specific responsibility for the co-ordination and reporting on the pandemic throughout the region and for monitoring the implementation of exiting and future projects.

We urge the European Union and its Institutions to renew their efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe, and particularly to assist the most-affected countries in its neighbourhood.

**By calling our leaders for strong leadership, we commit ourselves to establishing open and honest discussions with the European Commission and to providing technical assistance and advice through and by our network.**

Yours sincerely,

*Mauro Guarinieri, Board of Directors, Chair*  
*Lital Hollander, Policy Working Group, Chair*  
*Jean-François Dechamp, EATG Managing Co-ordinator*

for the members of EATG

This paper represents the views of its author on the subject. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission's or Health & Consumer Protection DG's views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.