

Open Health Forum Call for Action

Together for Health – Europe 2020 and beyond

What we can do together

- ✓ **Investment in community-based prevention health promotion programmes** to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, improve mental health, reduce alcohol-related harm and put an end to tobacco consumption **would significantly reduce health care costs**. Programmes should cover the lifecourse, leading to gains in worker productivity and quality of life across the whole population, including excluded and vulnerable groups.
- ✓ **Cost-effective preventative measures – such as smoking bans and pictorial warnings, vaccination, screening for cancer and tackling problem drinking** would significantly reduce the burden of mortality in Europe, as well as reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases.
- ✓ **Differentiation between primary and secondary prevention is crucial. Public health behavioral prevention measures such as a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, regular exercise, seat belt use, are cost effective and contribute to improving population health status.**
- ✓ **European healthcare systems need to invest more in primary and secondary prevention.** Current levels of investment in preventing disease and promoting health are not enough to maintain a healthy population
- ✓ **European healthcare systems need to deliver high quality and safe healthcare, accessible to all.** This includes continuity of care throughout the health system as well as ensuring access to excluded and vulnerable groups. Maximising quality of life and staying healthy for as long as possible is essential to ensure healthcare costs do not spiral into unaffordable levels, as well as ensuring a healthy population, as well as ensuring a healthy population as it ages.
- ✓ **A holistic approach to health and healthcare is necessary.** Many drivers of good – and ill – health lie outside the responsibility of the healthcare system. Our overall strategy for Europe needs to address these drivers if we are to achieve our social and individual goals to improve health and well-being in Europe. This relates to poverty and social exclusion, as well as the health in all policies approach.
- ✓ **A culture of well-being linking public health and medicines and medical technologies should be fostered and promoted.** Creating a culture of wellness creates a healthier population at a reduced financial cost to public service, and a reduced social and human cost.
- ✓ **A priority for Europe should be to start planning for and investing in the future health needs of an aging population** This involves more investment in prevention and promotion, health systems infrastructure and the health workforce. Many additional public health workers will be needed by 2020 than are available today. Up-skilling and enabling key workers to help deliver public health would improve overall health and social outcomes. Coherence in workforce policies is essential.
- ✓ **Cost effective investments in healthcare innovations that are accessible to all citizens** will benefit research, knowledge and employment whilst improving health and the productivity of healthcare systems and reducing disease. The development and availability of added-value new treatments and better diagnostics is essential, as well as an intelligent use of new technologies and e-health.

We call for European leaders to work with us *Together for Health* to help ensure the economic recovery is sustainable and inclusive.

Background

Our call for action

For all of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy proposals, health has a significant role to play. We believe that the EU 2020 headline targets and objectives will not be achieved without healthier Europeans, which means improved health outcomes and reduction in health inequalities. At a time of crisis, we are ready to play our part, as one of Europe's largest sectors. But to do that we call for European leaders to work with us in *Together for Health* to help ensure the recovery is sustainable, inclusive and meaningful for all citizens. Only then may the core EU objective to promote the wellbeing of its peoples be achieved.

Why we make this call

Since the previous EU Open Health Forum the Lisbon Treaty has set out the aim of the EU “to promote peace, its values and the wellbeing of its peoples” (Title 1 Article 3 2009). This clearly places wellbeing at the core of the purpose of the European Union.

Now the European Council has agreed conclusions for *Europe 2020: a new European Strategy for jobs and growth*, based on proposals by the European Commission (*Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*) after consultation with stakeholders. It includes the approach that “all common policies, including the common agricultural policy and cohesion policy, will need to support the strategy.” The new target based priority approach is likely to feature:

- Increasing employment for men and women
- Improving conditions, including investment, for research and development
- Increasing energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Improving education levels
- Promoting social inclusion and reducing poverty

The participants of the 2010 Open Health Forum note the importance of each of these developments for the future of health development in and beyond the EU, including the *Together for Health* strategy. We recognise our responsibilities to act, particularly in times of economic and social crisis. In turn we emphasise the important role of stakeholders and citizens in addition to Member States and EU Institutions, and call on Europe's leaders to ensure the vital role and needs of citizens' health are properly incorporated in a strong vision for Europe. In doing so we stress the key elements of the role health has to play in determining a successful and sustainable Europe by and beyond 2020.

The importance of public health

Achieving a ‘high level of health protection’ for all European citizens has been a clear objective of European Treaties since Maastricht (1992) including throughout the Article 168 of the Lisbon Treaty. It is also well recognised that high levels of physical and mental health and wellbeing are the foundations for other dimensions of European citizenship, including democratic participation, social and cultural integration, education, skills development and productive working life and a healthy old age.

A healthy European population is not only an ethical issue, but a cornerstone for economic success in a highly competitive, globalised world. It is essential that together we succeed in enabling good health for all.

There is much that can be done. Investing in prevention is cost-effective. We need to rethink our public health spending priorities and emphasize prevention. We have compelling evidence on how to measure and reduce inequities and disease burdens, yet only approximately four percent of total healthcare spend in Europe is estimated to be spent on prevention and public health. That is no longer acceptable.

(Source: extracts of European Health Policy Forum submission to Europe 2020 consultation)