



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Opening Remarks by Commissioner Kyriakides at the Press Conference on the EU4Health Programme

Brussels, 28 May 2020

Yesterday, as Vice-President Schinas mentioned, we proposed what is probably the most ambitious economic and financial package of our lifetime in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences.

With the recovery package and the revised EU budget for the next seven years, we put forward a strategic vision both to address today's situation as well as tomorrow's challenges.

As part of this package, the new EU4Health Programme will be a game changer, a real paradigm shift in how the EU deals with health, and a clear signal that the health of our citizens is more than ever before a priority for us.

This crisis has made clear that our collective response capacity needs to be brought to a different level.

The calls during the crisis have been loud and clear: we need more Europe in the area of public health.

I have had countless meetings with EU ministers, the European Parliament, stakeholders and scientists. These exchanges and the lessons learnt from them inform our proposals. We have listened carefully to the citizens and what they expect Europe to be able to do for them in the area of health.

Our proposal for a stand-alone funding Programme of €9,4 billion is dedicated to responds to these calls.

We are stepping up to these challenges with an over 2000% budget increase compared to current resources for health. This will allow us to face the challenges brought to light by the crisis, but also to invest in EU health systems for the future.

How will we do this? What are our ambitions with EU4Health?

Our first objective is to be better prepared to react and protect our citizens should a similar cross border crisis hit us in the future.

To do so, we will aim to ensure that we have, at all times, the necessary protective equipment, medicines and medical devices available, and ensure that they are affordable and innovative.

Never again do we want to see our health care workers having to choose which patient receives life saving equipment.

EU4Health will enable us, for the first time, to create strategic stockpiles, so we can plan ahead and have reserves in case of crises. This will complement the capacity under rescEU for emergency response in a more strategic and forward looking way.

Our programme will also provide for a reserve of healthcare staff - including flying doctors - that can be deployed in times of crisis and where such resources are most needed.

When hospitals are overburdened in one Member State, we should have the capacity to step in with resources that are available elsewhere.

In addition, to increase crisis preparedness and crisis management, we will reinforce the European Medicines Agency and give a stronger role to the European Centre for Disease Control when it comes to coordinating medical responses in crises.

But EU4Health is not only about crisis management – it goes far beyond that. It is about strengthening national health systems, supporting Member States in their efforts to make them more resilient and better performing, and enabling them to deliver better care for patients across the EU.

With this programme, we will also be able to make a real difference for our work on other health

priorities, in particular our fight against cancer, reducing of the number of antimicrobial-resistant infections and improving vaccination.

EU4Health means that we will be able to financially support ambitious actions to reduce inequalities in cancer screening and treatment across Europe.

It will also allow us to accelerate digital health capacity, cross-border health care and increase investment in disease prevention and health promotion.

EU4Health also means that we will be able to upscale important existing tools such as our European Reference networks, now a reality in the area of rare diseases, and which will also be established to improve diagnosis and treatments of other diseases.

The programme will run until 2027, but all the actions relating to crisis resilience will be heavily frontloaded in the first years of the programme.

EU4Health will allow us to make a difference for the health of our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would even say that this is a new chapter for EU health policy.

I thank you for your attention.

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