



European Commission - Speech
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Opening Remarks by Commissioner Stella Kyriakides to the European Parliament Plenary Joint Debate on the European Health Union

Strasbourg, 3 October 2022

Chair, Honourable Members,

I would like to start by expressing my great appreciation to this House for your support in turning the European Health Union proposals from ambition into reality. This strong European Health Union is a vision we share.

In November 2020, we presented that ambition: a set of proposals to build a strong European Health Union and to make the EU better prepared to prevent, prepare for and respond to cross-border threats to health.

Less than two years on, we are gathered here for the final steps in the adoption of the Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health and the Regulation extending the mandate of our European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Both serve as very important building blocks for European Health Union.

Both fit neatly together with the other important pieces of legislation for the new European Health Security Framework.

Thanks to our joint work, we will extend the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention's mandate.

A stronger ECDC will:

- issue recommendations to Member States regarding health threats preparedness;
- host a new excellence network of EU reference laboratories; and
- establish an EU Health Task Force for rapid health interventions in the event of a major outbreak.

As we have all witnessed, the ECDC has been essential in making sense of and managing the pandemic. With a stronger focus, we will be better prepared for the future.

The new Regulation on serious cross-border threats paves the way for a stronger EU role

in preventing, preparing and managing health threats.

You have been instrumental in delivering on citizen expectations for more EU in the area of health, something we have also heard consistently during the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Honourable Members,

Parliament has fought hard to have some key elements included in the package. I especially extend my thanks to the Rapporteurs - Honourable Members Kopcińska and Trillet-Lenoir, and their teams for this. We have worked together tirelessly to get here today.

You have each played your part in securing the provisions on joint procurement of medical countermeasures.

You supported inclusion of the “One Health” approach.

You made sure that “prevention” featured alongside response and preparedness activities.

With your support, we have made sure that Member States will have to report on stocks of critical medical countermeasures. They should take account of the Union preparedness plan that we will develop when updating their national plans. Also, the ECDC is empowered to assess those national plans periodically, on top of the periodic reporting from Member States.

Meanwhile, the EU's Health Security Committee will be reconvened at senior level and will be able to issue recommendations and opinions. With Parliament's new observer status secured, I'm pleased to say that the committee has become even stronger.

I must mention that the Commission does maintain some institutional concerns on both texts and will issue statements on these points accordingly.

Honourable Members,

This debate gives me the opportunity to thank you once again for your support in bringing the entire European Health Union package to where it is today and towards its formal adoption.

As we move to the implementation phase, we will be taking further important steps together along our path from ambition to action.

This can only mean even better results for our citizens. This is what they rightfully expect from us.

Thank you.

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