



Statement by Commissioner Kyriakides on World Health Day

Brussels, 6 April 2023

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella **Kyriakides** marked World Health Day on 7 April with the following statement:

"Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen the weaknesses in our healthcare systems and how the world was simply not prepared to face a crisis of this magnitude. These challenges have been exacerbated by the Russian invasion in Ukraine, which highlighted even further the crucial role of well-functioning health systems.

We have been laying the foundations for a strong European Health Union that will not only reinforce the EU's common preparedness to tackle emerging health threats, but also allow us to help build the strong, resilient and sustainable health systems of tomorrow that will ensure better care for patients every day.

Ensuring accessible, affordable and high-quality medicines is a top priority for the year ahead. Our reform of the EU pharmaceutical legislation will address this crucial issue by improving access to innovative and affordable medicines for patients, enhancing security of supply to reduce the risk of medicines shortages, and support a globally leading and innovative EU pharmaceutical industry.

More broadly, we need to continue strengthening the resilience of our health systems to fully serve the needs of our citizens. This requires ongoing and increased investments – in facilities, supplies and staff.

This means, for example, accelerating the wider use of digital health solutions in all care settings as well as at home. Digital health can empower patients to monitor their own health and can also help to improve possibilities for healthcare across borders. We saw great leaps in telemedicine during the pandemic and these need to be harnessed and rolled out in health systems more broadly. Our proposed European Health Data Space, a key pillar of our European Health Union, will provide wider access to safe health data to healthcare professionals, while encouraging research into new and innovative lifesaving treatments.

Crucially, health systems need to invest in their workforce and address the current shortages. The pandemic demonstrated that we require a well-trained health workforce, in suitable numbers and with the right skills, including digital skills, to address the health challenges of the 21st century.

The EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility has made investment in healthcare systems one of its key benchmarks for EU's recovery. Across all the 27 national Recovery and Resilience Plans adopted by the Council, more than €43 billion are planned for health investments and reforms to deliver better health outcomes for our citizens.

Of course, we cannot look at health in the EU alone. As the pandemic has demonstrated, it is also important for us to work together with international partners for stronger health systems and pandemic preparedness worldwide. Our Global Health Strategy is Team Europe's vision for global solidarity and partnerships in health. As the WHO celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, the EU is committed to working with our partner countries towards delivering on the universal health targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, combating health threats more robustly, and a stronger global health governance.

The challenges we face in the area of health have made equal access to health for all more critical than ever. On this World Health Day, we reiterate our commitment to making health for all a reality worldwide."

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