



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 1.6.2022
C(2022) 3741 final*

*Mr Ion-Marcel CIOLACU
President of the Camera Deputaților
Palatul Parlamentului
Strada Izvor nr. 2-4, sector 5
RO – 050563 BUCUREȘTI*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions introducing HERA, the European Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority, the next step towards completing the European Health Union {COM(2021) 576 final}.

On 11 November 2020, the Commission put forward its plans to build a European Health Union¹, a new health security framework fit for the health challenges of tomorrow. A key component of a strong European Health Union is the recently established HERA. On 16 September 2021, the Commission put forth the so-called 'HERA package' consisting of a Communication introducing HERA², a Commission decision establishing HERA³ and a proposal for a Council Regulation on a framework of measures for ensuring the supply of crisis-relevant medical countermeasures in the event of a public health emergency at Union level⁴.

The Commission welcomes the view expressed by the Camera Deputaților about the importance of a coordinated response, in a spirit of solidarity, between Member States in the face of cross-border health crises and its support to the creation of HERA. Moreover, the Commission welcomes the acknowledgment of the importance of a strong health security framework provided for in the proposal for a Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health⁵.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Building a European Health Union: Reinforcing the EU's resilience for cross-border health threats, COM(2020) 724 final.

² COM(2021) 576 final

³ C(2021) 6712 final

⁴ COM(2021) 577 final

⁵ COM(2020) 727 final

The Commission also shares the view of the Camera Deputaţilor on the importance of strengthening the European Union's own research and production capacities for medicinal products, including vaccines. On this point, the Commission would like to recall that HERA was set up to strengthen Europe's ability to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to cross-border health emergencies, by facilitating the development, manufacturing, procurement and distribution of critical medical countermeasures. Research and innovation is an essential component of HERA's work, as it is key to ensuring the development of medical countermeasures, such as vaccines and therapeutics, to tackle cross-border health threats. Horizon Europe⁶ – the European Union's Research and Innovation Framework Programme – supports the HERA objectives and relevant research and innovation projects, including key enabling European research and technology infrastructures (such as the European clinical trial networks for therapeutics⁷ and vaccines⁸ or the European COVID-19 Data Platform⁹) and a candidate European partnership in pandemic preparedness¹⁰, which will be open for participation to all Member States.

The Commission welcomes the Camera Deputaţilor's support to European campaigns and highlights that the Commission and the High Representative have been supporting Member States in their endeavours to promote authoritative content throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, identify and respond to information manipulation and disinformation, as well as to attempts to exploit the crisis. A coordinated response continues to be necessary, not least in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The Commission and the High Representative continue to facilitate the sharing of communication materials between European Union institutions and Member States, whilst also monitoring, analysing, and swiftly reacting to threats to public health. With the European Democracy Action Plan¹¹, the European Union and its citizens should be better equipped and more resilient to the impact of unintentional misinformation, as well as intentional information manipulation and disinformation in the long term. The Commission looks forward to working with the Camera Deputaţilor on actions linked to enhanced cooperation with online platforms under the strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation, support for European fact checkers and sustained actions to empower and enable citizens to respond to the threat of information manipulation and disinformation.

The Commission would also like to recall the importance of improving the knowledge of biology among children and young people in the European Union. As a powerful vehicle for instilling healthy behaviours and lifestyles among young people, many of those issues are included in the reference materials developed by the European Commission like the

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁷ <https://eu-response.eu/> and <https://covid19trials.eu/en>

⁸ <http://vaccelerate.eu>

⁹ <https://www.covid19dataportal.org/>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/european-partnership-pandemic-preparedness_en

¹¹ COM/2020/790 final

Council Recommendation on Key competences for Lifelong Learning and the more detailed framework for the personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences LifeComp, which covers well-being and sustainable living. However, the Commission would like to stress that, according to the Treaties governing the European Union, school organisation, school curricula and the specific course content are the responsibility of each of its Member States. The Commission only takes action to encourage, support and complement the activities of the Member States in the field of education by, for example, sharing good practices and supporting those practices through its Erasmus+ programme and developing reference materials.

As regards the need to cooperate with the Western Balkan and the Eastern Partners on access to essential medical countermeasures, the Commission would like to recall that it already has many specific avenues for cooperation to support them in the event of a crisis. For example, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, all the Western Balkans were invited to join the European Union Joint Procurement Agreement for medical countermeasures. Moreover, the Commission adopted a EUR 70 million package of grants at the end of 2020 to help fund the access of the Western Balkans to COVID-19 vaccines. To date, over 5.2 million doses of vaccines have been donated by Member States or financed by this grant to the region, including 438.780 via COVAX, which has been significantly supported by European Union funding and vaccine donations, and has provided almost 2.8 million doses to the region. This makes a total of almost 8 million doses of vaccines delivered via Team Europe and via COVAX.

Furthermore, the Commission agrees with the Camera Deputaţilor that HERA should provide operational recommendations with regard to medical countermeasures and their stockpiling and deployment.

The Commission would like to reassure the Camera Deputaţilor that HERA will publish a yearly management plan, outlining the main priorities and outputs of HERA and assessing its performance through a comprehensive system of indicators. In addition, as explained in the Commission Decision, the Commission will carry out an in-depth review of HERA by 2024, including on its structure and governance, and will report to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the HERA Board on the findings of the review, which will be made public.

As regards the need to guarantee full transparency of the use of funds allocated to HERA, the Commission confirms that the transparency about the use of funds will be ensured. Furthermore, as a service of the Commission, HERA's budget is subject to the scrutiny of the budgetary authority.

The Commission believes that the political dialogue with national Parliaments is essential for linking the institutions with the citizens of the European Union, and looks forward to continuing it with the Camera Deputaților in the future.

Yours sincerely,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Stella Kyriakides
Member of the Commission*