ENRF Briefing Note on

EU4Health Stakeholders Conference

The European Commission hosted the **EU4Health Stakeholders Conference** which aimed to discuss about **health priorities, strategic orientations and future work programme.** In particular, the event focused on **5 key topics:**

1. Improving and fostering health;

2. Protecting people;

3. Enhancing access to medicinal products and medical devices;

4. Preparing health systems for the digital era;

5. Exploring synergies and complementarities.

Sandra Gallina, Director-General for Health and Food Safety, underlined the importance of involving the relevant stakeholders in the development of the European Commission **Work Programme 2023**.

*"The Annual Work programme 2021 up to 2023 provides to strengthen the **resilience of the healthcare sector in EU** in order to face next crisis that no leave anyone behind", said Sandra Gallina.*

Pierre Delsaux, Director-General of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), intervention focused on the need to invest in preparation and to develop tools for being ready for next crisis. The **EU4health programme** is a great opportunity for investing in the healthcare sector, but also in HERA. As Pierre Delsaux stated, *"the budget provided by the EU4Health programme is useful to detect **future health crisis and new diseases** and HERA is working on it. Another example of the impactful use of this money is EUPHA - which focuses on the acceleration of the vaccines production above all in crisis context"*. He concluded underlining the importance **to invest in preparation** as the most important objective.
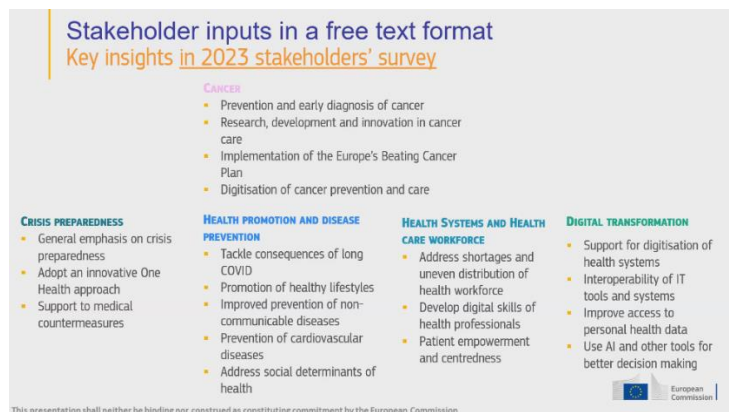
Antonio di Giulio, Head of Unit, DG SANTE C.3, gave an overview on the results of the **EU4Health stakeholders' consultation** and focused on the main objectives from the stakeholders' perspective:

o   Health promotion;

o   Access to healthcare;

o   Health data and digital tools;

o   Availability and accessibility.

Some key **messages:**

✓   Stakeholders are very interested in consultations;

✓   The priorities remained very similar to the last year;

✓   The Coverage of the work programme do match the stakeholders' input;

✓   The interests of people who responded to the survey goes beyond EU4health beneficiaries.

Stakeholder inputs in a free text format
Key insights in 2023 stakeholders' survey

CANCER
- Prevention and early diagnosis of cancer
- Research, development and innovation in cancer care
- Implementation of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan
- Digitisation of cancer prevention and care

CRISIS PREPAREDNESS
- General emphasis on crisis preparedness
- Adopt an innovative One Health approach
- Support to medical countermeasures

HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION
- Tackle consequences of long COVID
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles
- Improved prevention of non-communicable diseases
- Prevention of cardiovascular diseases
- Address social determinants of health

HEALTH SYSTEMS AND HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE
- Address shortages and uneven distribution of health workforce
- Develop digital skills of health professionals
- Patient empowerment and centredness

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
- Support for digitisation of health systems
- Interoperability of IT tools and systems
- Improve access to personal health data
- Use AI and other tools for better decision making

This presentation shall neither be binding nor construed as constituting commitment by the European Commission

5 topics were discussed:

- o   Mental health, diseases prevention, cancer plan;
- o   Health Security Framework, Countermeasures to fight crises;
- o   European Health Data Space, Digital dimension of the EU Global Health Strategy;
- o   Implementation of legislation on substances of human origin legislation, Implementation of legislation on medical devices, Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe;
- o   Synergies.

On the first topic - Mental health, diseases prevention, cancer plan - **Michele Cecchini, Responsible for the [OECD work programme on Public Health](#)**, gave an overview on the work made by the OECD in cooperation with the EU Member States and the European Commission, including the **[guidebook](#)** being used by Member States as **best practice** for treating chronic diseases.

Find out more on the best practices in Public Health:

- -   [Guidebook on best practices in Public Health](#)
- -   [Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyles](#)
- -   [Integrating Care to Prevent and Manage Chronic Diseases](#)

He also highlighted some **challenges** faced during the study:

- o   Difficult to involve people at the same time;
- o   Difficult to collect all the necessary data;
- o   Doing the transfer is difficult and sometimes do not fit all.

Michele Cecchini concluded that *"For the future, it is important to focus more on responding to priorities, but it is also important to focus on tools necessary to understand the challenges that we can have in 10 years".*

Sarah Harrison, from **the [International Cooperation of Red Cross](#)**, talked about the **[programme](#) launched last year** on the countries hosting the **Ukrainian refugees,** and which aims to give the necessary **mental health support**. According to the study conducted, there was a **lack of services** for guaranteeing mental well-being of Ukrainian refugees and **difficult to access** to care for those people already suffering from mental health problems.

Sarah Harrison explained that *"From this study, it emerged all the mental issues of refugees related to what has happened in Ukraine and the distance from their families which brought also to suicides attempts. More collaboration with the EU is necessary to address the Ukrainian health needs".*

On the second topic - Health Security Framework, Countermeasures to fight crises - **Lisa Schipper** from **the [Dutch National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM)](#),** presented the network created to improve **national surveillance systems** and **database on epidemiological diseases**.

The 2 **challenges faced** for creating the joint action have been:

- o During the preparation phase to get and keep countries interest and collaboration;
- o During the implementation phase on the legal issues related to GDRP and privacy connected to share of data.

On the third topic - European Health Data Space, Digital dimension of the EU Global Health Strategy - **David Novillo Ortiz,** from **WHO,** highlighted the issue related to **the lack of comparable data** for each country for Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs). From the WHO perspective, the investment on digital tools is essential.
General challenges highlighted:

- o Define and calculate Covid-19 data;
- o Lack of interoperability at the global level;
- o Lack of a data strategy.

On the fourth topic - Implementation of legislation on substances of human origin legislation, Implementation of legislation on medical devices, Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe - **Bernardo Rodrigues,** from the **European Blood Alliance**, stressed that in Europe there is a low level of donation and high level of shortages of plasma. In this context, the **EU4health supply project** was launched, with the aim to **strengthen all supply chain and donators' recruitment and retention**.

Furthermore, **Zaide Frias**, from the **European Medicines Agency**, underlined the main challenges related to **the access to medicines,** and advised to **focus on some key points**:

1. Development of additional capacity to use resources;
2. Elaborate strong regulatory network promoting transparency among pharmaceutical industries, doctors and healthcare professionals;
3. Strengthening the ability to respond to health crisis.
4. Synergies with existing structure for the sustainability of the investments.

As Zaide Frias stated, *"The investment in capacity can help to respond to health crisis and can make easier the access to medicines"*.

On the last point - Synergies - **Caterina Buonocore,** from the **APRE -** Agency for the Promotion of European Research**,** explained that *"it is difficult for researchers to catch the right opportunities. They need to be guided. APRE, in practice, helps researchers to understand the best funding opportunity for their needs".* APRE, which represents the National Contact Point and helps researchers to **find funding opportunity** in the context of Horizon Europe, is focusing on the development of better services for researchers. In terms of **synergies,** APRE is organising different events in which more actors, inside and outside of the public sector, can have the opportunity to meet each other.

For more information, see these 2 links: **National Contact Points of Horizon Europe** and **Joint Action on Increasing Capacity building of National Focal Points.**

Simon Drees, from DG Reform, made a brief introduction on his DG that delivers **technical support** in the **social sectors, public administration and other areas**. Some examples of the projects they support:

- ✓ On **workforce planning**, DG Reforms supported a project made in **Ireland** in which they restructured the workforce planning to assess the sustainability of any efforts;
- ✓ On **cancer**, DG Reforms supported a project in **cancer screen and care in Latvia and Slovakia** to boost more clinical trials of cancer;
- ✓ On **integrated care**, DG Reforms launched a call for application for integrated care for **strengthening the coordination between primary care and long-term care**;

From more information, see the **Structural Reforms Support.**

Annika Nowak, from **DG Research and Innovation**, presented the joint group launched in March which produced some recommendations aiming to the **council recommendations of screening in the cancer plan.** These include:

✓ The council recommendations need to be implemented more and need to be clear on how the Commission will support the member states in cancer and cancer screening;

✓ Boost and support research for creating new tools in the cancer context.

For more information, read also: **Health Systems Performance Assessment Expert Group.**

The EU4Health Programme is the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to build a strong European Health Union by supporting legislative and non-legislative Union health priorities. With a budget of EUR 5.3 billion over the period 2021-27, this represents an unprecedented level of financial commitment for the Union in health.

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