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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council
Subject: European Union Global Health Strategy
- *Information from the Commission*

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Commission on the above mentioned subject to be raised under “Any other business” at the meeting of the EPSCO Council (Health) on 9 December 2022.

Information Note: Communication on an EU Global Health Strategy

The experience of recent years, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted as never before that **health has no borders**. The well-being and lives of citizens, the prosperity and stability of societies and economies, and sustainable development in general, all depend on addressing health from this perspective. Global health is an essential pillar of EU external policy, a critical sector geopolitically **and central to EU strategic autonomy**.

Since the EU's last 2010 Communication on the EU role in global health, health challenges are **fast** evolving—in an equally rapidly-changing **geopolitical** environment. At the same time, new opportunities linked to areas like **research** or **digitalisation** have arisen. A robust **Global Health Strategy** is needed to provide a new, coherent, effective and focused policy world-wide.

This strategy represents both the external dimension of the **European Health Union**, which protects the well-being of Europeans and the resilience of their health systems, and a key component of the **Global Gateway** which builds partnerships with third countries based on joint responsibility and co-ownership.

The EU's leading role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it can make a major contribution to global objectives with the Team Europe approach. The main message of this strategy is that the EU intends to **reassert its responsibility** and **deepen its leadership** in the interest of the highest attainable standards of health, based on **fundamental values**, such as solidarity and equity, and **the respect of human rights**.

The challenges are significant. There is a **massive unfinished agenda** in global health, as progress towards the universal health targets enshrined in the **Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals** (SDGs) has reversed in many countries: collectively, only a quarter of 2030 goals has been achieved. Major infectious diseases represent a heavy burden on many countries and high infant, maternal mortality and under-nutrition remain matters of concern among others. At the same time, it is essential to address global health security swiftly and comprehensively, to better prevent and be more resilient to face pandemics.

To contribute to the delivery of better health for all in a changing world, a **different approach** is needed, starting with **what** must be done. To this end, the strategy focuses on **three core priorities**.

Going back to fundamentals, the first two essential priorities are: **investing in the well-being of all people and reaching universal health coverage with stronger health systems**. In order to achieve these two goals, we need to shift our focus, as the landscape is very different from 2010:

- In addition to traditional root causes of ill-health like poverty and social inequalities, **new drivers of health** must be addressed in an integrated manner, such as climate change, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises, or food insecurity, aggravated by crises like the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. This is why it is essential to mobilise a wide number of policies to work for a global health agenda.
- **Surging challenges**, like antimicrobial resistance and mental health, or **evolving challenges** of health systems, including workforce imbalances and resources shortages must be prioritised, alongside maximising new opportunities for health offered by powerful enablers, like research and digitalisation, including the use of artificial intelligence.

The third core priority is combatting **current and future health threats**, which also requires a new focus. It calls for enhanced equity in the access to vaccines and other countermeasures; for a “One Health approach” which tackles the complex interconnection of climate, environment, and animals, with humanity; for a more effective disease surveillance worldwide; and for stronger international rules and cooperation mechanisms on health.

As we shift the focus on what to do, an **equally fundamental shift** must occur on **how** to do it. A new global health order is emerging —and the EU must contribute to shaping it through a more strategic and effective engagement.

The EU has a unique potential to drive international cooperation. **Expanding partnerships** with a wide range of relevant stakeholders is of the utmost importance—promoting **health sovereignty for more resilience and strategic autonomy** supported by partners' political commitment and responsibility. Our relationship with international partners must be guided by common priorities in line with this strategy.

To enhance the EU's role as a strong and effective player, the **Commission and the EU Member States** should work closer than ever in a **Team Europe approach**, with new mechanisms to better coordinate policies, actions and financial efforts to maximise impact—speaking and acting together.

Global governance will require a new focus to maintain a strong and responsive multilateral system, with a World Health Organization (**WHO**) at its core which is as sustainably financed as it is accountable and effective. Consensus should be built through deepened cooperation through G7, G20, and other global, regional and bilateral partners. The EU should drive the essential process of **filling the existing gaps** in global governance, avoiding duplication and ensuring coherence of action. This will need close cooperation with the private sector, philanthropic organisations, civil society and other stakeholders to support this strategy's objectives.

Effective funding is another key element of the strategy. The EU and its Member States are collectively among the largest funders of global health – whether in terms of global goods (financing international organisations and global health initiatives), development aid, or humanitarian assistance. This strategy's ambitions will require high political commitment globally, as well as an important commitment of resources. The EU financial contribution will follow a **new approach** involving innovative finance, co-investment from partners and pooling with other international actors —and the EU's influence in shaping the agenda must match its financing support as a champion of global health.

Success will naturally depend on the **contribution of our partners**—but the EU will fully take its **responsibility**. This includes improving health preparedness and response **within the EU** as part of the European Health Union, as health developments in the EU affect partners across the world and vice versa. In the EU, universal health coverage and a strong EU health security framework will continue to be developed by taking forward key initiatives under way or under preparation. These include the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, the Pharmaceutical Strategy, and the European Health Data Space¹ to be adopted. Combatting health threats more comprehensively will be possible with the implementation of the new Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health², the reinforced mandates of the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control³ and of the European Medicines Agency⁴, the work of the new Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority to improve preparedness and response in medical countermeasures, and a One Health network to act against all pathogenic threats with integrated surveillance.

Better healthcare delivery, strategic autonomy in health-related value chains, and strong action on antimicrobial resistance will also all act as powerful foundations for a strong EU position worldwide. We will continue supporting Member States in implementing health reforms and investment under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. And we will implement the European Green Deal to fight root causes of ill health in the EU. All this work, together with the new strategy, will form a seamless continuum for health protection in the EU and worldwide.

¹ 2022/0140(COD)
² 2020/0322(COD)
³ 2020/0320(COD)
⁴ OJ L 20, 31.1.2022, p. 1–37

The strategy offers an agenda leading up to **2030**. It sets **three policy priorities**, provides for **guiding principles** to shape global health, makes concrete **lines of action** that operationalise those principles, and creates a new **monitoring framework** to assess effectiveness and impact of EU policies and funding. It outlines what the Commission will do and what it invites Member States to do, each strictly within their respective competences and institutional roles as provided for in the treaties. The strategy builds on the **important contribution** of successive Presidencies of the Council, the civil society shadow Global health strategy from July 2020⁵, and other key stakeholders—including the input received during a wide public consultation.

⁵ Towards a New EU Global Health Strategy: Civil society shadow Global Health Strategy; AAH, Action Against Hunger, AidsFonds, DSW, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, Global Health Advocates, IPPF, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Save the Children Europe, WaterAid