



The EU calls on France and the European Union to make a Europe of Health a political priority

Today, the Committee adopted its opinion on “How to build a Europe of Health?”.

The Covid-19 crisis has forcefully demonstrated the need to build a coordinated, efficient and protective European health system for citizens. The pandemic highlighted the importance of the European scale as well as challenges to be addressed: today, while 74% of Europeans would like the EU to acquire more skills to deal with health crises and future pandemics in particular (European Parliament Eurobarometer), only 48% of them are satisfied with its action during the pandemic, pointing in particular to its delay (Conference on the Future of Europe).

The construction of a Europe of Health is an ambitious and strategic project, one which must embody a global public health project to meet the expectations of the population: access to a quality health system for every citizen, development of prevention policies, access to cross-border care, freedom of movement of professionals and patients. The implementation of this project also involves many challenges: policies, governance, inequality in access to care in different states, investment in research, industrial capacity, data management and public health.

Taking as its starting point the lessons to be learned from the management of the Covid-19 pandemic and in the context of the current French Presidency of the European Union, the ESEC sets out 17 recommendations for laying the foundations for an effective European Health System, capable of meeting these challenges and the expectations of its citizens. These include:

- **Making health a political priority on the agenda of European bodies and states**

In a pragmatic way, the **EU proposes using the enhanced cooperation procedures between Member States**, as provided for in Article 20 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular by stepping up cross-border cooperation and health prevention policy.

The establishment of a Europe of health requires piggybacking and steering at the highest level: the ESEC therefore recommends that **the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety be appointed to be responsible for the coordination of EU health agencies**, under the supervision of the European Parliament, while fostering coordination with other European public policies.

Furthermore, Europe of Health will not happen without the development of a real vision of health at the international level and the strengthening of visibility on health issues within multilateral forums. The ESEC recommends that a **genuine European Health Strategy be defined in order to strengthen its voice on the international stage.**

Prevention, mental health and health at work must be the policy priorities of the Europe of Health, **according to the ESEC, which supports the development of a European directive on psychosocial risks and well-being at work** so that every citizen can enjoy the same rights and protections in terms of occupational health.



- **Building a unique model that is consistent with the values of Europe and is adapted to the needs of European citizens**

The ESEC supports the construction of a common European model for global health (called “one health”) based on the EU’s values of solidarity and social and territorial cohesion, which also takes into consideration the European Union’s animal health and environmental objectives.

It also calls for the development of the health democracy and for European citizens to be integrated into the governance systems of the European health agencies.

- **Addressing the challenges of investment in research, industrial capacity and data management**

The Covid-19 crisis has provoked a great deal of debate around the easing of access to patented inventions with a public interest objective, with recurring questions around the automatic licensing mechanism. **In the event of an epidemic and health emergency, the ESEC asks the European Commission to grant compulsory licences making it possible to use patents.**

Furthermore, in order to ensure an efficient basis for digital protection, **the ESEC recommends that a common database be set up at the European level under the responsibility of the European Medicines Agency (EMA)**, in order to provide a real-time accurate overview of the status of stocks of medicinal products of major therapeutic interest and alerts in case of insufficient stocks or supply chain issues.

*This opinion was reported by Catherine Pajare Y Sanchez (CFDT Group) and Benoît Miribel (Associations Group) on behalf of the Committee on European and International Affairs chaired by Serge Cambou (CGT-FO Group). It was presented at the plenary meeting of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of 12 April 2022 at 2:30 p.m. **The opinion was adopted with...***

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