



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Health systems, medical products and innovation  
**Performance of national health systems**

## **Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (2019-2022)**

**7th plenary meeting**

**28 April 2021**

**13:00-16:00h CET**

**MS Teams**

**Minutes**

The seventh plenary meeting of the Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (term of office 2019-2022) took place on 28 April 2021 virtually. The meeting, which was a non-public meeting, was chaired by the Panel's Chair, Professor Jan De Maeseneer.

### **1. Welcome and introduction**

The agenda was approved without changes, the minutes of the previous plenary meeting of 10 February were approved earlier in writing and have been published on the Expert Panel website.

Dr Kringos informed the Secretariat and the Panel that she became an associated professor at the Amsterdam University Medical Centre.

No conflicts of interest were raised on matters of the agenda.

### **2. EU health developments – update on European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA)**

The Commission (Wolfgang Philipp, Head of Unit Health Emergency Response and Vaccines in DG SANTE) presented the latest developments and mission of HERA.

COM highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for coordinated EU level action to respond to health emergencies. The crisis revealed gaps in foresight, including demand/supply dimensions, preparedness and response tools. HERA would be a central element for strengthening the European Health Union with better EU preparedness and response to serious cross-border health threats, by enabling rapid availability, access and distribution of needed resources and countermeasures for future crisis.

COM presented the timeline of actions leading to the establishment of HERA. The Inception Impact Assessment was carried out in the beginning of 2021 presenting several policy options

and posted on the Commission's website for feedback. This was followed by stakeholder consultations, including a public consultation through March to June 2021. The legislative proposal should be ready in the second half of 2021. HERA should be fully operational by 2023. COM detailed the consultation process with Member States, as well as regular exchanges with European Parliament, Council and relevant agencies.

COM gave a brief update on HERA incubator with key actions to boost preparedness to Sars-CoV2 variants, develop vaccines for the variants and increase industrial production.

COM invited Expert Panel members to provide feedback on HERA via the open public consultation either individually or as a group.

Members welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the relevance of the information for the Panel, especially for the opinion on European solidarity in public health emergencies which is currently being drafted.

### **3. Opinion on public procurement in healthcare systems**

The chair of the Panel recalled that the opinion was preliminarily approved in the plenary of 10 February but in the written procedure, consensus was not found. As a result, the chair convened an informal meeting with involved members in March to discuss steps to achieve a consensus opinion. The members agreed to re-open the opinion.

The revised opinion focussed on the recommendations was circulated to the members of the panel prior to the meeting. Members unanimously agreed to the changes and the **opinion was adopted**.

The chair thanked to all members for their work on this complex opinion.

COM indicated that it is aware of the need for more research and evidence to prove health benefits of using public procurement and plans to launch a study on procurement of pharmaceuticals in summer 2021.

### **4. Opinion on European solidarity in public health emergencies**

Members of the drafting group met on 3 March and 19 April. Following the resignation of the original chair, Dr Kringos was confirmed as the new chair (she also keeps her role as a rapporteur) and Dr Murauskiene has been designated as an additional rapporteur.

The chair of the drafting group gave an update on the draft opinion. The chair presented to the Panel the main chapters and sub-chapters that are being elaborated in the drafting group meetings, including EU solidarity in health emergencies: concept, values, mechanisms, the theoretical concept of solidarity, importance of EU solidarity in times of health emergencies, as well as technical and practical ability to realize solidarity. The importance of citizen's support, political willingness for EU solidarity and public opinion on European solidarity in times of COVID-19 are also being elaborated in the opinion. The chair touched upon the chapter on EU solidarity in future health emergencies, including the joint efforts and harmonized responses via an EU framework and the issue of sustainability and the required transformation at EU, national and regional level to operationalize EU solidarity.

Concerning the next steps and planning of further meetings, the Chair of the Panel informed the members that the Secretariat drew his attention to certain budgetary issues resulting from the late adoption of the 2021 Work Programme of the EU4Health programme. COM confirmed that an exceptional budget will be available soon so the work of the Panel can continue without interruption.

The next meeting of the drafting group is scheduled for 25 May. Members agreed to schedule a virtual public hearing to present the draft opinion to stakeholders for beginning of July pending availability in the Health Policy Platform.

## **5. Opinion on mental health of health workforce and other essential workers**

Members of the drafting group met on 4 March and 16 April as well as in two focus groups on 11 and 15 March. The chair of the drafting group and rapporteurs updated the Panel on the work on this opinion.

Rapporteurs presented to the Panel the main chapters. Specifically on factors influencing mental health of the health workforce and of the other essential workers, on what interventions could be effective in addressing their mental health support needs, and what are the conditions for delivery of these interventions in a cost-effective, affordable and inclusive manner. Rapporteurs detailed what specific work still needs to be done to finalise the main chapters.

Rapporteurs further reported on the key ideas discussed in the focus groups concerning delivery conditions for the possible innovative short and long term interventions/actions to improve mental health at individual, organisational and societal levels. They also presented the feedback received from the European Agency for Safety & Health at Work (EU OSHA).

On recommendations the rapporteurs stressed that they are being formulated on a general level with concrete action points.

Members raised some additional concerns which could be added and elaborated in the opinion, such as a role of mental health in the context of socio economic measures during lockdown, importance of prevention and compassion resilience.

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 May. Members agreed to schedule a virtual public hearing to present the draft opinion to stakeholders for beginning of June pending availability in the Health Policy Platform.

## **6. Any other business and next steps**

The chair thanked all participants and, before closing the meeting, reminded members that the next plenary meeting is scheduled for 23 June 2021 via MS Teams.

## **7. List of participants**

### **MEMBERS**

BARROS PITA Pedro  
DE MAESENEER Jan  
GARCIA-ALTES Anna

GRUSON Damien  
KRINGOS Dionne  
LEHTONEN Lasse  
LIONIS Christos  
MCKEE Martin  
MURAUŠKIENE Liubove  
NUTI Sabina  
ROGERS Heather  
SICILIANI Luigi  
WIECZOROWSKA-TOBIS Katarzyna  
ZACHAROV Sergej  
ZALETEL Jelka

**RESEARCHER**

KIRKBY Victoria

**DG SANTE**

PHILIPP Wolfgang  
GESLIN Laure  
MATTHEWS Maya  
DAJKA Bela  
TERENCIO MARQUES Ines  
VOLOSINOVA Viera