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## Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health Hearing on 'European solidarity in public health emergencies'

Brussels, 16 September 2021 (virtual meeting)

### Aim and objectives

The Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (EXPH) is an interdisciplinary and independent group established by the European Commission in 2012 to provide non-binding independent advice on matters related to effective, accessible and resilient health systems in the form of opinions.

The aim of this hearing was to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to share their views on the draft opinion of the Expert Panel on '**European solidarity in public health emergencies**'. The draft opinion was made available on the Expert Panel's website prior to the hearing.

### Panel members - speakers

Prof. Jan De Maeseneer (Chair of the hearing), Dr Dionne Kringos (Chair of the drafting group), Prof. Christos Lionis, Prof. Liubove Murauskiene (Rapporteurs)

In total around 80 participants attended the hearing.

### Presentation of the draft Opinion

The Chair and the Rapporteurs presented the main elements of the opinion including (1) the theoretical concept of solidarity (2) solidarity in the European Union and the importance of EU solidarity in times of health emergencies (3) citizen's support and political willingness for EU solidarity (4) EU mechanisms to foster solidarity. The rapporteurs stressed the need to operationalise solidarity and gave illustrative examples of solidarity.

The opinion concludes with the Panel's recommendations, including:

- ✓ Build on existing trust: The EU can foster and further strengthen solidarity, ensuring that vulnerable people are not left abandoned as resources shift to dealing with a pandemic, nor are they forgotten in the context of the additional support they may require in the context of the pandemic.
- ✓ Strengthen primary health care, public health and mental health support systems: The EU could further promote integrated people-centred primary care including availability of interdisciplinary work, information and communication capacity and technology. Prevention, health promotion and management of chronic care and vulnerability, focus on mental wellbeing as well as health care of socially isolated groups are important elements.

- ✓ Address the global dimension of a crisis: The EU should extend its solidarity by taking a leading role in a new dialogue with low and middle-income countries, addressing populations not yet protected.
- ✓ Increased alignment, coordination and responsiveness at the EU-level to improve health systems' ability to prepare for, and cope with, "surges" of need or demand.
- ✓ Data solidarity: The EU should take the lead in transforming and fostering transparent and accountable governance of public and private sector data ensuring all safeguards to protect privacy are in place, creating a common framework for the exchange of such data.
- ✓ Nurture bottom-up good practices: Create sufficient room for strengthening the successful actions and planning related to preparedness plans to benefit from insights gained from what happened in cross-border settings.
- ✓ Monitor the interplay between trust and solidarity: developing a methodology to assess the effect of implementation of solidarity mechanisms on trust at EU and national level.
- ✓ Regulations, institutions, and practices should include solidarity as a guiding principle which will strengthen the relationship between EU solidarity and trust in the EU.

#### Open discussion: participants' views

Participants in the discussion:

- Supported the recommendation on strengthening primary care with inclusion of social and long term care and stressed the need to invest more in primary care and people-centered approaches.
- Pointed out the shortages of health professionals and the need for collaboration and task-sharing among them as well as the role of training.
- Emphasised the global dimension of solidarity.
- Supported the recommendation on building trust in institutions including EU, highlighted the importance of citizens engagement and inclusiveness.
- Drew attention to the importance of mental health and well-being of health workers as well as citizens.
- Suggested to reinforce a recommendation on minimum standards of health capacities in the health systems as well as on the availability of health workforce.

In a live poll conducted during the hearing, 52% of respondents said they represented NGO/Associations, 29% academia/think tanks, 5% health service providers. In a poll asking participants to rate their involvement in the Covid-19 pandemic response, majority of participants (39%) rated it as 7 (on a scale from 0-10, low to high). In a poll question to rank the Panel's recommendations in order of importance, the recommendation to promote people-centred primary care and mental health care with focus on vulnerable was ranked as No.1, followed by the recommendations to build on existing trust in order

to strengthen solidarity, and to increase alignment, coordination and responsiveness to surges, including minimum standards for surge capacities in health systems.

#### Next steps

Participants were invited to send any additional comments by 1 October 2021 via email to [SANTE-EXPERT-PANEL@ec.europa.eu](mailto:SANTE-EXPERT-PANEL@ec.europa.eu).

The Panel will finalise its work on this opinion in the next months.