

EU 2019-2024: Health Champions Wanted!

9 October, 18.30 – 20.30

European Parliament, Room JAN 6Q1

On 9 October 2019, HOPE co-organised an event at the European Parliament hosted by MEP Peter Liese (EPP, Germany) and MEP Sara Cerdas (S&D, Portugal).

This event was an initiative emanating from nine organisations: HOPE, AIM (International Healthcare Payers Association), CED (Council of European Dentists), CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors), PGEU (Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union), EMSA (European Medical Students Association), EuroHealthNet (European partnership for health, equity and well-being), EPF (European Patients' Forum) and ESIP (European Social Insurance Platform) and attended by about 80 participants.

The event aimed at drawing new MEPs attention on the main health-related challenges that the EU is facing, in the perspective of their mandate for the period 2019-2024. It consisted in two panel debates at which participants highlighted the greatest healthcare challenges for the coming years and the need for EU collaboration to tackle them. The event was a great opportunity to show that the health community is united and ready to speak with one firm voice as a trustworthy collaborator to EU Institutions.

MEP Liese opened the meeting by confirming that there is a clear momentum at European level when it comes to health policies. He also stressed that health concerns are above concerns of economic growth for most but that there is a need to “do better” when it comes to policy making in the field. To achieve that improvement, according to him, collaboration with all stakeholders is necessary. He welcomed the coalition which organised the event.

The first panel tackled the issues of social determinants of health, health equity and prevention. EuroHealthNet took the floor to highlight the need for a more holistic approach to health, which builds bridges across sectors and takes into account the impact of all policies on the health and well-being of individuals. The lack of adequate budgets to health promotion and disease prevention was also highlighted. The European Medical Students Association (EMSA) called all stakeholders to recognise the importance of digital health literacy and skills for the future health workforce and outlined strategies for the enhancement of those competencies. Focussing on oral health, the Council of European Dentists (CED) stressed the need to reform health systems, to achieve a comprehensive and integrated approach to

health, and to improve the collaboration between all actors: health professionals, patients, and payers but also researchers and educators. During the debate CED underlined a clear message from the coalition organising the event: health services cannot be treated as commercial services. The European Patients Forum (EPF) underlined the timeliness of the event. The difficult recognition of the patients' perspective and the engagement of patient advocacy organisation into the policy process were the focus of its intervention. EPF called on the European Parliament to closely collaborate on prevention issues, and on strengthening patients' perspective and voice at European level.

The second panel was entitled "EU response to health challenges" and dealt with the topics of AMR, vaccination and pharmaceuticals. The European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE) highlighted the challenge which AMR represents for hospitals, long term care and other healthcare services. HOPE stressed the need for intensive collaboration and coordination between Member States and called for the One Health Approach, which requires the involvement of all relevant sector. Finally, their three key elements of success were listed: antibiotic stewardship, infection prevention and control and training and in particular continuous education and information. The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) described AMR in similar terms as a problem which is everyone's responsibility. CPME called for more severe rules on the use of antibiotics for humans and highlighted the importance of vaccination, also in the fight against AMR. Regarding vaccine hesitancy, CPME called on the EU to build up education of the general public but also of physicians.

The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) described the rising unavailability of medicines in Europe and how pharmacists currently deal with that issue. PGEU called on the EU to ensure availability on the one hand but also to widen the scope of pharmacy practices in case of shortages, so as to allow pharmacists to better manage patient care and ensure continuity of treatment; to establish effective communication frameworks between all medicine supply chain actors and national competent authorities ; to ensure that community pharmacists have timely information on a (foreseen) medicine shortage; and to compensate the negative financial impact of shortages through appropriate reimbursement and remuneration provisions. PGEU also asked for a close collaboration between EU Member States and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to improve reporting, monitoring and communication on medicine shortages.

The International Healthcare Payers Association (AIM) tackled the financial aspect of the availability of medicines, considering that sustainable access to medicines is one of the priorities for this new mandate of the European Commission and the European Parliament. AIM stressed that both sustainability and better health outcomes of European patients are the cornerstones of a good and future proof health care system. It called for fair pricing to be an operating principle for European policy on pharmaceuticals and informed the Parliament

that it is currently working on a model for fair pricing of medicines which will be shared with all partners once launched. AIM called for the fast adoption of the HTA legislation and invited the European Commission and Parliament to commission a study on price transparency taking into account: State-of-the-art and robust methods for the calculation of R&D and production costs in the pharmaceutical sector. AIM also affirmed that it would welcome an own initiative report of the EP dealing with fair pricing, building on the report dated 2017 of Soledad Cabezón Ruiz. It also called for a high-level group on fair pricing, which could come up with recommendations to edge closer to fair pricing for the benefit of the health of European citizens while enabling the power of the European pharmaceutical companies and innovation and rewarding pharmaceutical innovation.

The European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) underlined that public investment in health research and innovation must be steered towards unmet public health needs. ESIP called for the involvement of payers and other public health stakeholders in the setting of research priorities and incentives. According to them, public investment in health research and innovation needs to be met with complete transparency and must be linked to equitable access conditions. ESIP also highlighted how key linking open access and open data requirements to publicly funded research is and called for a broader stakeholder representation in any future European partnership on innovative health.

In her closing remarks, MEP Sara Cerdas briefly summarised the topics discussed. She underlined the need for a concerted approach on cross-border issues and expressed her commitment to collaborate with the organisations represented in the two panels in order to deliver a better and more evidence-based policy process at EU level.