

Dear I-Com representatives, guest speakers, colleagues and participants,

I really want to thank you for having organized and nurtured this event with your exceptional experience and knowledge on such an important issue as the future of the European Health Union.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that health threats do not respect borders and why a more coordinated European response is needed. Despite the magnitude of the impact of COVID19 and the lack of coordination in the early stages of the pandemic, much has been achieved through the joint response of the Union.

The health and socio-economic crisis generated by the pandemic has put all sectors under tremendous pressure, while representing an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the organisation and management of national and cross-border healthcare.

In addition, demographic trends, climate challenges, access to innovation and better treatment for all, the high prevalence of chronic diseases, the urgent need for digitalization of the health sector and the sustainability of national health systems have exponentially increased the focus on health policy at EU level as never before.

Member States remain responsible for most health policies. However, the European Union has many more possibilities than the ones that are currently used. Reality has shown that we cannot overcome this and other possible future health crises acting on our own. Nor by confronting local and national competences or national ones with European ones. It can only be overcome if we work together.

A stronger coordination of European Health Governance with Member States, regional and local governments is an absolute priority. Apply a Health in All Policies approach, which aims at horizontally integrating health aspects into all relevant policies, such as agriculture, transport, international trade, research, environment and climate, is essential.

There is no doubt that if we want a real Europe for Health we have to build it together from all sectors, making the most of all the instruments, mechanisms and strategies that the European Union has at its disposal, to strengthen the actions of all countries and to ensure lasting health-centred wellbeing for all.

The European Plan to Fight Cancer, which, in this new constitution, together with the Cancer Mission of the Horizon Europe Research Programme, is unprecedented, aims to promote greater cooperation between Member States, complementing national cancer plans, facilitating the exchange of knowledge among professionals and avoiding working as 27 watertight compartments, it is also an opportunity to implement a Union Health strategy.

The New EU Pharmaceutical Strategy, which the Commission will present on 24 November, aims to improve and accelerate patient access to safe and affordable medicines, and to support innovation in the EU pharmaceutical industry so that it remains a global leader.

In the Parliament, we will work to ensure that the Commission's proposal will integrate a holistic, patient-centred approach, with a long-term systemic vision, covering the entire life cycle of pharmaceutical products, and guaranteeing the rights of Europeans to the best treatments in any country of the Union, promoting the sustainability of the market and public finances.

We will facilitate the dialogue and the creation of synergies of the strategy not only with the other initiatives mentioned, but also with the other key policies and priorities, such as the Green Deal, Horizon Europe, the industrial and competition strategy, the intellectual property rights.

Innovation cannot be an obstacle. A balance must be found between innovation, its accessibility, and the sustainability of the system. We all together have to contribute to the sustainability of our health systems, so that longevity, as a health achievement, diseases as a problem to be defeated, and innovation as a solution to the problem, find the necessary balance to offer the citizen new and safe expectations for better health.

The European Plan for Beating Cancer, the Europe for Health Programme just approved by the Parliament with an autonomous budget more than ten times bigger than the previous, the European Strategy for COVID19 Vaccine, together with the EU's New Pharmaceutical Strategy, a common European space of BIG data on Health, and the strengthening of the European Health related agencies and mechanisms, can really represent the cornerstones of a true empowered Europe of Health, joining forces, renewing tools, and improving solutions.

Kind regards,

MEP Dolors Montserrat

