

PRESS RELEASE

Designing the future European Health Union? I-Com supports the first proposals and presents its paper to Commission, MEPs, experts

- The Institute for Competitiveness (I-Com) presented yesterday at its Health Symposium the paper "*Designing the future European Health Union? Scaling-up Ambitions, Powering Resilience*"
- A key political lesson of the Covid-19 crisis is that further collaboration is required in Europe to face health challenges such as the current pandemic, and the European Union seems to have understood this
- The way to beat cancer requires a 'health in all policies approach' and would involve acknowledging that health must play a key role in policy-making across many sectors
- The recent health crisis caused by Covid-19 clearly demonstrated the need to modernise the way in which the EU ensures access to medicines for its population. The pharmaceutical strategy is an important step in this direction

Brussels, 19/11/2020

A key political lesson of the Covid-19 crisis is that further collaboration is required in Europe to face health challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the European Union seems to have understood this. **In this regard, the Commission's first proposals towards a European Health Union should be strongly appreciated, while further steps forward in this direction need to be encouraged.** Europe needs to adopt a holistic and integrated approach that goes beyond the subsidiarity principle. This means that the way the EU institutions understand their work together with the Member States needs to be turned around.

These are some of the recommendations emerging from the paper "*Designing the future European Health Union? Scaling-up Ambitions, Powering Resilience*", prepared by the **Institute for Competitiveness (I-Com)** and presented yesterday at its Health Symposium. Among the speakers, there were, **Walter Ricciardi**, Chair of the Horizon Europe Mission Board for Cancer, MEP **Tomislav Sokol**, Member the Special Committee on Beating Cancer, **Sylvain Giraud**, Head of Unit at Commission's DFG SANTE. Other speakers include: DG SANTE's EMA's **Tony Humphreys**, WHO's **Sarah Garner**, Johnson & Johnson's **Anouk De Vroey**, ECPC's **Antonella Cardone**, EFPIA's **Elizabeth Kuiper**, ESMO's **Rosa Giuliani**. MEPs **Dolors Montserrat**, Co-Chair of the ENVI Committee's Health Working Group and **Patrizia Toia**, Vice-Chair ITRE Committee, sent a written contribution to the discussion.

The event provided a forum to debate on two key priorities on the EU health agenda, which the Commission is about to outline by the end of the year, the **Cancer Plan** and the **pharmaceutical strategy** – and was an opportunity to take stock of the proposal for a strengthened **European Health Union**, announced by Ursula von der Leyen in her first SOTEU address and detailed in the package

of initiatives presented last week by the Commission as a long-term response to the critical issues emerging during the Covid-19 crisis.

The paper – edited by **Stefano da Empoli**, I-Com President and **Eleonora Mazzoni**, I-Com Head of Innovation Area – underlines **the importance of elementary health data** relevant for research, recognised at the European level and highlighted by the high pressure resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, both on the research community and on the NHSs. **The top need is for a complementary and joint action to ensure that research findings and elementary health data can be shared rapidly, openly and effectively**, I-Com says.

On the upcoming pharmaceutical strategy, the paper highlights that market conditions for manufacturers in the European Union need to be improved. For instance, specific measures around regulatory flexibility which have been introduced during the corona-crisis with regards to marketing authorisation procedures should be considered. Developing clinical trial networks, biobanks and databanks, building a European health data space, delivering public-private collaboration mechanisms should be prioritised in order to accelerate the process towards this objective and in order to support and encourage innovative manufacturing.

On the future **Cancer Plan**, I-Com highlighted that cancer could soon surpass cardiovascular diseases as the disease group causing the greatest societal burden and it has already done so in many wealthy countries. *“The way to beat cancer requires a ‘health in all policies approach’ and would involve acknowledging that health must play a key role in policy-making across many sectors”* commented **Eleonora Mazzoni**.

Dolors Montserrat stated:

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.

Patrizia Toia said:

We have learned from Covid-19 crisis that EU action can be crucial in ensuring the supply of medicines where needed, supporting R&I in safe and quality vaccines, as well as coordinating a purchase plan on behalf of Member States. What is needed now is a well-functioning single space for health data sharing across different level of administrations, a renewed strategy on diseases prevention, in particular for cancer, a structured e-Health policy to reduce inequalities and more affordable and patient-centred medical services.

On the Beating Cancer Plan, **Walter Ricciardi** declared:

Cancer is our most important health challenge since Europe has 10% of the world population and currently 25% of the burden of disease for cancer. If we don't act promptly and effectively, we will have 50% of the burden of disease worldwide in 2035 and this of course is unacceptable. That is

why the Horizon Europe Mission Board for Cancer provided 13 recommendations to the European Commission.

On the upcoming pharmaceutical strategy, **Sylvain Giraud** said:

The strategy will address different challenges in relation to medicines shortage, following up on the political guidelines received by EU leaders and political input from the European Parliament. Another important aspect to address will be the security and continuity of the supply chain - an issue that has become more and more relevant during the Covid-19 crisis, particularly regarding the geographical imbalance across EU countries on the access to medicines.

WHAT IS I-COM?

The Institute for Competitiveness (I-Com) is an Italian independent think tank based in Rome and Brussels, founded in 2005 by a group of scholars, professionals and managers. I-Com aims at influencing the public debate at Italian, European and international level, analysing the most important drivers for competitiveness and growth and particularly focusing on Digital, Energy & Mobility, Healthcare and Innovation.

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