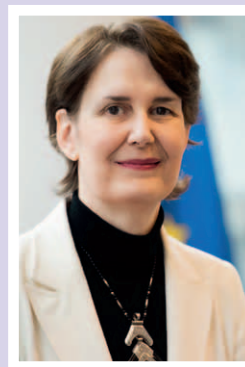


FOREWORD

European Health Union: a starting point to a healthier tomorrow

This time last year, I addressed you to mark 25 years of the European Health Forum Gastein. Landmark occasions such as these give us pause for reflection, on what we have faced, and what we have done, and what we look towards. As I reflect on this mandate, I cannot help but think of what has been achieved.



Despite the first pandemic in over a century and war returning to Europe, major and long-lasting change has been implemented, to build a strong European Health Union (EHU).

Europe's vaccine strategy demonstrated the power of solidarity, ensuring timely access to vaccines for all EU citizens. It is this spirit of solidarity that we are harnessing to unleash the full potential of our Health Union. The EHU has already made inroads in reinforcing our health defences. This started with the strengthening of the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, along with agreement on the Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health – all providing a stronger health security framework for the EU.

Amid uncertainty, we have powered through with major reforms in several areas to revitalise and reinvigorate the state of our Union's health, to make it better, stronger, and apt for the digital world of the 21st century. The launch of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan signalled our unwavering commitment to equal access to prevention and cancer care – even in the darkest of times – for all European citizens. And it is delivering in a major way. The new Cancer Screening Scheme, one of many actions already up and running under the cancer plan, is already in place. This will help EU Member States to ensure that 90% of the EU population who qualify are offered breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings by 2025.

Central to the EHU is the development of the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe, which aims to establish a patient-centred regulatory framework for

the 21st century. Access to affordable medicines is essential for a strong healthcare system. Our vision for a robust EHU relies on a modern, competitive, and simple to navigate pharmaceutical system that meets the needs of all individuals, regardless of where they call home.

Our commitment to place the interests of individuals at the centre was shown in the revolutionary proposal for the European Health Data Space (EHDS). This will empower people to access and control their health data, to improve data collection, sharing, and interoperability across healthcare systems in the EU. Furthermore, the revision of our pharmaceutical legislation and the Council Recommendation on antimicrobial resistance will drive EU action to tackle this growing threat.

As we look ahead, we are also conscious that mental health issues are on the rise. That is why, this year, we launched a comprehensive and prevention-oriented approach to promote mental health across EU policies.

The world is changing, and we are changing with it. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to our shared mission. Together, we can forge a stronger European Health Union and leave the legacy of a healthier, safer Europe for all.

Sandra Gallina, Director General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), European Commission

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