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New EU Global Health Strategy - Public Consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

There have been major changes since the 2010 EU global health strategy, and so a review is now necessary.

In the past decade, we have understood, more than ever, **the many related factors affecting health** and the need to address them in a comprehensive, joined-up way. This would also enable the EU to better tackle health inequalities and fend off global threats, all based on its commitments to human rights and health equity.

Climate change and the destruction of natural habitats have increased the risk of animal viruses, which can cause pandemics. This brings the close links between the environment, animal and plant health, and human health sharply into focus (the 'One Health' approach).

There is also a better understanding of the complexity of gender's effect on health and of the link between lifestyle and nutrition; or between non-communicable diseases and mental health.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has underlined the importance of effectively preparing for and reacting to emergencies. At the same time, it has slowed down or even reversed progress in meeting the international community's health goals set out in 2015 (the UN's Sustainable Development Goals). Most of all, it has been a call to reflect on how other EU policies, described below, can help fight global health threats.

- Health systems must be strengthened to withstand threats, and existing gaps in **international cooperation** must be closed to ensure the right to healthcare for everyone.
- A **new approach to pharmaceuticals and technologies** is necessary to ensure access for everyone to safe, high-quality, affordable and effective treatments, while boosting innovation to deal with neglected needs and diseases.
- **Digitalisation** is a powerful tool with huge potential to facilitate access to health and deal with global health needs. **Research** is an essential enabler as more powerful technologies become available.
- **Social protection, education and skills** are essential to make universal health coverage a reality and curb inequalities so that everyone has access to health services.

Finally, **the global landscape has changed** in the following two ways.

1. In a more geopolitical world, health has inevitably acquired a geopolitical dimension, linking with other policies such as trade or security. This confirms the need for a 'health in all policies' approach.
2. Many private and public players and initiatives have emerged, helping to tackle threats but making it more challenging to achieve an effective and coordinated approach.

As we advance our European Health Union, our international approach has been adapting to the fundamental changes outlined above. It is necessary now to set out **a strategy that builds on the experience from the last decade and provides guidelines** for the coming years in a complex environment. This will ensure, beyond pandemics, that the EU and its Member States can effectively improve the health of citizens, reduce health inequalities, protect against threats, and consolidate EU global leadership in health.

The new strategy should be considered together with the parallel communication on pandemic preparedness and response, which is also in preparation.

As confirmed by Eurobarometer surveys, **health is one of the topics for which EU citizens** see the greatest legitimacy for EU global action. This strategy should therefore reflect the views and concerns of the public and organisations concerned.

To provide guidelines for an updated global health strategy, this open consultation asks what policies and measures should the EU focus on and how this should be done. Each section starts with a summary of the current state of reflection in the Commission (which are not necessarily Commission positions).

Respondents can then comment on these reflections and complement them.

About you

*Language of my contribution

English

*I am giving my contribution as

Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

If you selected 'Other' in the previous question, please specify below

- Professional health organisation
- Health professional
- Civil society organisation
- International organisation
- Governmental/multilateral organisation

*First name

Arnaud

*Surname

Goessens

*Email (this won't be published)

agoessens@wcs.org

*Organisation name

255 character(s) maximum

WCS EU

*Organisation size

Micro (1 to 9 employees)

Organisation budget (please specify what percentage is of public funds if relevant)

Transparency register number

255 character(s) maximum

Check if your organisation is on the transparency register

(<http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do?redir=false&locale=en>). It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making.

054662633848-40

*Country of origin

Please add your country of origin, or that of your organisation.

This list does not represent the official position of the European institutions with regard to the legal status or policy of the entities mentioned. It is a harmonisation of often divergent lists and practices.

Belgium

*My organisation is from/I work in (if different from country of origin)

EU member state

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The Commission will publish the responses to this public consultation. You can choose whether you would like your details to be made public or to remain anonymous.

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Only organisation details are published: The type of respondent that you responded to this consultation as, the name of the organisation on whose behalf you reply as well as its transparency number, its size, its country of origin and your contribution will be published as received. Your name will not be published. Please do not include any personal data in the contribution itself if you want to remain anonymous.

Public

Organisation details and respondent details are published: The type of respondent that you responded to this consultation as, the name of the organisation on whose behalf you reply as well as its transparency number, its size, its country of origin and your contribution will be published. Your name will also be published.

I agree with the personal data protection provisions (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/specific-privacy-statement>)

Part 1. Stakeholder input

The EU strategy should provide more structural and effective channels of dialogue with the public and stakeholders to ensure their views are fully considered and help adapt to a fast-changing environment. The annual Global Health Policy Forum (held on 21 June 2022 as part of the European Development Days) is an opportunity to collect input for this consultation and follow up the strategy's implementation after it has been adopted.

1. What are your ideas to improve stakeholder input and their channels to follow up the strategy's implementation?

1,000 character(s) maximum

Transparency and inclusiveness in EU debates and decision-making processes are critical. We, therefore, call on the Commission to increase the transparency of EU Health Policy decision mechanisms and to provide opportunities to receive further input and expertise from civil society at every stage of the process. In particular, we call on the Commission to further engage with local, national, and international NGOs and partners across public health, wildlife conservation, and other relevant sectors with considerable expertise in global health. The One Health approach indeed recognizes the essential link between human, domestic animal and wildlife health for zoonotic health threats and more fundamentally that biodiversity and intact ecosystems are essential to maintaining the healthy environments, food systems and economies we all require.

Sources:

The Berlin Principles:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969720364494>

Part 2. Defining priorities

Considering the diverse issues outlined above, the EU global health strategy must identify a manageable number of key priorities. The priorities described below are interconnected at times, reflecting the complex nature of the issues addressed. However, each priority deserves individual attention.

Beyond the importance of ensuring proper pandemic prevention, preparedness and emergency response, four priority areas appear key to structure our strategy.

- Effective and resilient health systems are essential to tackle health inequalities, being prepared for health threats and responding to them effectively. This requires investment in the health workforce, community health systems, inclusive and quality services, and public health capacities. Effective and resilient health systems also need to leverage digitalisation and give timely access to affordable and innovative pharmaceuticals and other medical countermeasures. Countries are generally more resilient to health threats when the overall population is in good health. This means stepping up efforts to achieve the health-related UN Sustainable Development Goals. Universal health coverage is a critical objective in this regard.
- A multi-sectoral, evidence-based 'One Health' approach is essential to mitigate the main risks from interactions between humans, animals and the environment, including the threat of antimicrobial resistance.
- Health issues have links with and are affected by many other policy areas. This means health has to be part of those policies (e.g. trade, global supply chain resilience, strategic autonomy) that are essential in helping achieve health policy objectives. The EU should map all single market and external tools that could be activated to help meet its global health goals and set out the conditions for their use.

For a definition of health systems, see WHO/Europe | Health systems (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems>).

For Sustainable Development Goals see Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3) | United Nations Western Europe (unric.org). (<https://unric.org/en/sdg-3/>)

2. What priority should be given to the areas described above?

	L o w	Me diu m	H igh
Improve pandemic prevention, preparedness and response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Strengthen health systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Accelerate progress in achieving the health-related UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular universal health coverage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Apply the 'One Health' approach comprehensively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Ensure global health is part of all policies, including mapping and activating policies and tools that can contribute to health goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

3. Name five policies that have the most important impact on health goals in your view, and explain why.

1,000 character(s) maximum

The new EU law on serious cross-border threats to health will be critical but doesn't sufficiently integrate a One Health Approach. The new text reinforces preparedness, surveillance, risk assessment, early warning and responses at EU and member state level in the event of cross-border threats to health, but fails to address prevention at source at the global level. The science is clear that pandemics of zoonotic origin, such as COVID-19, are directly related to the increased human/wildlife interface caused by land-use change, in particular the destruction of intact ecosystems; deforestation and forest degradation; and the role of urban markets in live wild birds and mammals and wildlife farm. Pandemic prevention at source is the single most effective -- and cost-effective -- way to prevent loss of human life, avoid economic disruption, and mitigate the inequities of climate change and biodiversity loss in an increasingly interconnected world.

4. What other priorities are more important than those described above? Why? Which of the issues above should be de-prioritised as a result?

1,000 character(s) maximum

Governments and multilateral agencies must break down their sectoral silos and collaborate around the common goal of preventing future pandemics at the source. The EU Commission should therefore establish a One Health dialogue that brings together all relevant Directorates-General (DGs) and stakeholders to establish up-to-date One Health strategies and action plans.

To have a meaningful impact on significant reduction of the risk of future pandemics of zoonotic origin, all efforts must be made to prevent the pathogen spillover in the first place. The EU must promote and assist the global community, first, in protecting intact ecosystems and stopping deforestation and environmental encroachment and conversion to limit the human-wildlife interface, and second, in ending the commercial trade and sale in markets of wildlife for human consumption, particularly birds and mammals.

5. What are the main obstacles to achieving these priorities? What measures need to be taken to overcome these obstacles?

1,000 character(s) maximum

Significant investments are necessary to bridge knowledge on modern holistic One Health framing and explore structural changes across public administrations in order to enable One Health approaches. Beyond a lack in One Health capacity at the present, the existing administrative units and associated workflows are highly siloed undermining cross-sectoral collaboration and One Health approaches. Building on a consensus OH approach (e.g. based on the Berlin Principles and the One Health High-Level Expert Panel definition) we need cross-sectoral funding streams in order to mainstream One Health across all policies. With respect to Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs) veterinary and environmental health sectors are chronically under-resourced for zoonotic-pathogen emergence investigations and research but are critical in implementing the necessary One Health approach (e.g. investigations of wildlife, wildlife products, live animal markets, land-use change, species distribution and density).

Part 3. Ensuring robust governance

EU leadership has played a major role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU and beyond, especially through the Team Europe approach. However, the EU's global impact can be boosted further, not least given its substantial financial contributions to global health. EU leadership should be strengthened in three ways, together with more effective communication.

The first way, which could have a big impact, is to lead by example and apply an effective and comprehensive health policy within our own borders. Showing we meet our own responsibilities is essential to be credible in our external action—where we ask partners to make significant efforts. There are areas where we could improve and boost its credibility. Examples include: (i) better measures against antimicrobial resistance; (ii) stepping up efforts to ensure universal access to safe, accessible, affordable and innovative pharmaceuticals and technologies to tackle infections and non-communicable diseases (including neglected diseases); (iii) an improved pandemic prevention, preparedness and response framework; and (iv) increasing digitalisation.

6. The importance of leading by example in each of these areas is...?

	Low	Medium	High
Universal access to health care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pandemic prevention, preparedness and response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Vaccination levels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anti-microbial resistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe, affordable, accessible and innovative pharmaceuticals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digitalisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Following robust bioethics principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. In what other areas should the EU lead by example? Why? Give a maximum of three areas.

500 character(s) maximum

Pandemic preparedness and response are very important, but it is critical to emphasize pandemic prevention, particularly prevention at source, to ensure that it has equal footing. Pandemic prevention at source is the single most effective -- and cost-effective -- way to prevent loss of human life, avoid economic disruption, and mitigate the inequities of climate change and biodiversity loss in an increasingly interconnected world.

The second way to strengthen EU leadership is to improve coordination so as to speak with one voice— together with Member States, the European Parliament and stakeholders – at global, national and regional level.

8. How could this coordination be strengthened?

1,000 character(s) maximum

It is critical that the EU increases transparency and provides opportunities to receive further input and expertise from civil society at every stage of the coordination process. In particular, the Commission should further engage with local, national, and international NGOs and partners across public health, wildlife conservation, and other relevant sectors with considerable expertise on global health.

The third way to strengthen EU leadership is by ensuring the appropriate and full participation of the EU in international forums and initiatives, including in decision-making. This builds on the EU's commitment to multilateralism.

9. Do you agree or disagree that the EU needs to fully participate in international forums and initiatives?

- Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree

10. How should the EU participate? In what forums and initiatives?

1,000 character(s) maximum

The EU should fully engage and participate in the drafting and negotiations of the new convention, agreement or other international instrument under the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The EU should ensure that civil society and scientists are engaged in the negotiations, and make pandemic prevention at source a priority in this new WHO pandemic instrument.

Additional material: <https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/16978/WCS-Statement-on-the-World-Health-Assemblys-Agreement-to-Launch-Global-Accord-on-Pandemic-Prevention-Preparedness-and-Response.aspx>

Global health requires a strong multilateral approach. This approach must be further strengthened by making the WHO and global health initiatives more efficient, with effective governance and adequate financing, and ensuring full capacity for implementation. This includes a binding pandemic instrument and strengthened international health laws. An improved multilateral approach should ensure transparency, accountability, effectiveness—as well as enforceability of rules.

11. How can the EU support multilateralism with the WHO at its centre? (1000 characters maximum)

1,000 character(s) maximum

The EU should fully engage and participate in the drafting and negotiations of the new convention, agreement or other international instrument under the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The EU should ensure that civil society and scientists are engaged in the negotiations, and make pandemic prevention at source a priority in this new WHO pandemic instrument. See response provided in Question 10.

Additional material: <https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/16978/WCS-Statement-on-the-World-Health-Assemblys-Agreement-to-Launch-Global-Accord-on-Pandemic-Prevention-Preparedness-and-Response.aspx>

To further support multilateral work, the new strategy should strengthen bilateral cooperation (with non-EU countries) and plurilateral cooperation (with groups of countries, including the G7, G20 and OECD, and develop strategic health partnerships with other regions in the world). This cooperation should be based on mutual responsibility and effectiveness. Cooperation with the US and the EU-African Union Summit of February 2022 have both laid the foundation for improved partnerships in health.

12. How can we best engage bilateral and plurilateral partners? Who are the key partners?

1,000 character(s) maximum

It is critical to improve disease and zoonotic-origin pathogens detection through data collection, analysis, and sharing. The WildHealthNet tool, developed by WCS, facilitates data integration from the environment-health nexus and the spillover frontlines with existing public health networks while bridging and building capacity across national and regional administrations. The WildHealthNet has been successfully implemented in Southeast Asia and is now being trialed with government partners in Latin America, specifically, in Peru and Guatemala. More information:

<https://oneworldonehealth.wcs.org/Initiatives/WildHealthNet.aspx>

Key partners:

- Preventing Pandemics at the Source
- International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade
- Belgian One Health Network
- WHO, OIE, FAO and UNEP
- Global Virome Project, Viral Emergence Research Initiative (VERENA), and USAID's STOP Spillover, and DEEP VZN projects

Global philanthropic organisations take an increasing place in the dialogue on global health discussions, providing more funding than many countries do. A wide range of private and public players and global health initiatives have also emerged. The new strategy should ensure that EU and global efforts complement each other and avoid fragmentation and duplication.

13. How can we ensure efficiency and effectiveness when working with philanthropic organisations and other private and public players and initiatives?

1,000 character(s) maximum

Enhanced communication and coordination are key, as well as increased stakeholder engagement.

Part 4. Financing our strategy effectively and efficiently

Considerable financing is clearly necessary to address health challenges and problems – an issue unto itself given the resource context in the EU and abroad. The EU should improve coordinating and monitoring its spending to ensure transparency, consistency, proportionality and effectiveness in delivering its health policy goals.

14. Do you agree or disagree that there should be a more comprehensive mapping of all actors and finance strands in the EU and its Member States to monitor financial efforts and results?

- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree

15. Do you agree or disagree that there should be a mapping of all global health players and investments, their goals, results and other details, such as thematic or geographic goals?

- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree

16. Please let us know what other suggestions you have to improve transparency, consistency, proportionality and effectiveness in delivering our health policy goals.

1,000 character(s) maximum

It is critical that the EU increases transparency and provides opportunities to receive further input and expertise from civil society at every stage of the coordination process. In particular, the Commission should further engage with local, national, and international NGOs and partners across public health, wildlife conservation, and other relevant sectors with considerable expertise on global health.

Part 5. Other comments and ideas

17. Please share any other comments or ideas

2,000 character(s) maximum

1. Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Increased support is needed to scale-up locally-produced, sustainable non-wildlife high quality, nutritious food, to enhance food security and reduce dependence on wild meat, particular for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), as one of a number of One Health approaches. The EU is already leading efforts in this area through the seven-year Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, funded by the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). SWM is developing innovative, collaborative, and scalable new models to conserve wildlife and improve food security for IPLCs. SWM is being implemented by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and WCS. More targeted efforts are needed to support IPLCs, for example, through scaling-up the EU SWM Programme.

2. WHO pandemic instrument

A fully integrated trans-sectoral "One Health" approach will provide the necessary framework for recovery from COVID-19 while generating co-benefits across a globalized world pommelled by climate change, biodiversity loss, and social injustice. A new international treaty can help catalyze this change. Last December, the World Health Assembly agreed to initiate a process to form an international pandemic instrument. Such new WHO instrument must focus on pandemic prevention at source, not solely on preparedness and response.

More information:

1. WCS Policy on Preventing Epidemics and Pandemics of Zoonotic Origin: The role of Wild Meat Markets and Wildlife Trade: www.wcs.org/get-involved/updates/wcs-policy-preventing-epidemics-and-pandemics-of-zoonotic-origin
2. WCS Recommendations How the EU Biodiversity Strategy Can Help Reduce the Risk of Pandemics of Zoonotic Origin: <https://programs.wcs.org/Portals/0/Brussels/WCS-ENVI-hearing.pdf?ver=2021-01-07-211640-147>

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