Open letter to the European Council

EU leaders must focus on sustainable, equitable Europe that fosters, and is sustained by, a healthy population.

Dear President,

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you ahead of the European Summit at the end of this month, where together with your European counterparts you will discuss the EU response to the economic crisis.

In these difficult times, we urge you to set out a sustainable vision for Europe and demonstrate decisive leadership. As representatives of those most affected by the crisis as well as those who work with and serve the people living in Europe, we look to you for confident action that prioritises the needs of citizens.

We are concerned that after two years of austerity and fiscal consolidation, the EU has so far only narrowly escaped an economic recession and growth prospects remain dismal. Market forces are increasingly unpredictable as seen by the response to the injection of finance into Spain and this is threatening confidence in democracy, and ultimately the values that underpin European society. We are concerned that the toll on ordinary people living in Europe is intolerable, affecting their physical and mental health while health systems are at crisis point. Those who can afford it the least, are affected the most.

We urge you to show the courage to think beyond the short-term and to support measures that strengthen solidarity-based systems of social protection including health care. We ask you to draw lessons from economies which are showing resilience amid crisis and reforms. Austerity measures put in place to appease financial markets are proving to be a threat to legitimate, democratic government and ultimately to democracy itself.

As you discuss the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR), we recall the June 2011 Council Conclusions towards modern, responsive and sustainable health systems which stated: “Investments in health should be acknowledged as a contributor to economic
growth. While health is a value in itself, it is also a pre-condition to achieve economic growth* and called for the health sector to play a key role in the implementation of the EU2020 strategy. Thus when discussing austerity measures and reforms to public finances, it is important to understand that cutting spending in social protection and health (primary, secondary and tertiary care) is ultimately a false economy.

We recognise the need to find efficiencies and sustainable healthcare reforms, and urge you to act strategically. **Indiscriminate reductions in health and social services today will both lead to late detection of illness and higher long-term costs and take away the much needed support that people in Europe need to be resilient and emerge quickly from the economic crisis.**

The evidence is already emerging of a rise in mortality, morbidity and communicable diseases. Short term savings from cutting health and social spending as proposed in some Member States will both mean worse health and social outcomes and higher expenditure because patients will need more intensive and expensive interventions in the longer term. **Indiscriminate cuts are making a worrying situation even more dangerous and our fear is that this will threaten the economic recovery prospects for Europe as a whole, deny universal and equitable access to quality health care, force a transfer of care and payment onto households and destabilise the social values undermining Europe. A successful EU 2020 strategy promotes the European values of equity and equality, including gender equality, social justice and wellbeing and we encourage you to put this high on your agenda.**

In order to achieve Europe’s full potential for prosperity, solidarity and security we need you to act decisively, boldly implementing reforms that are not regressive, but tackle some of the underlying problems within our health systems. The priorities for public spending should not be left to economists and the whims of the financial market, but must reflect the needs and challenges facing society, while tackling directly fear and fragmentation within our societies. **Inequity has been one of the drivers of the crisis: greater equity and equality must be one of the solutions.**

Bold decisions can lead Europe through today’s big challenges and offer the next generation the hope of a better future. By taking the real needs of people into consideration with the CSRs, **EU leaders can create a more sustainable, equitable Europe that fosters, and is sustained by, a healthy population.** At this decisive time the public health community and people living in Europe **look for courageous leadership from Heads of States and Government to take action on prioritising and championing the health, safety and well-being of your people, not sacrificing this for short term dubious financial gains.** We offer our full support and collaboration during the drafting of national reform programmes and CSRs and in the implementation and monitoring of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Yours sincerely,
Signatories

Members of the European Parliament

Cristian Busoi, MEP
ALDE, Romania

Alejandro Cercas MEP
S&D, Spain

Nessa Childers
S&D, Ireland

Marisa Matias, MEP
GUE/NGL Portugal

Antoniya Parvanova MEP
ALDE, Bulgaria

Alojz Peterle, MEP
EPP Group Slovenia

Dr. Pavel Poc, MEP
S&D, Czech Republic

Bart Staes, MEP
Greens, Belgium

Glenis Willmott, MEP
S&D, United Kingdom
International and European Organisations

Archie Turnbull
President
The European Public Health Alliance

Maria Teresa Petrangolini
Director
Active Citizenship Network

Anne-Sophie Parent
Secretary General
Age Platform

Kristina Sperkova
Secretary General
Active

Mr Jean-Philippe Huchet
President
Association Internationale de la Mutualite (AIM)
Professor Helmut Brand
President
ASPHER

Eberhard Schatz
Coordinator
Civil Society Forum on Drugs

Dr Konstanty Radziwill
President
Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

Dr Thierry BRIGAUD
President
Medecins du Monde France
Dr Alvaro GONZALEZ
President
Medicos del Mundo Spain
On behalf of - Doctors of the World International Network

Agnes Uhereczky
Director
Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union
Koen Block
Executive Director
European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)

Dr Roberto Frontini
President
European Association of Hospital Pharmacists

Dr João de Deus
President
European Association of Senior Hospital Physicains (AEMH)

Francis Grogna
Secretary General
European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention

EU HIV/AIDS
EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

Anna Zakowicz
Co-chair, Civil Society Forum

Lella Cosmaro
Co-chair, Civil Society Forum

Eberhard Schatz
Coordinator
Correlation - European network Social Inclusion and Health
Øystein Ogre
President
European Chiropractors Union

Clive Needle
Director
EuroHealthnet

Prof. Walter Ricciardi
President
European Public Health Association

Anders Olauson
President European Patients' Forum

Cécile Gréboval
Secretary General
European Women’s Lobby

Nace Kovac
President
Mental Health Europe
Michele LeVoy
Director
Platform for International Cooperation on
Undocumented Migrant

Conny Reuter
Secretary General
SOLIDAR

Catherine Hartmann
Secretary General
European COPD Coalition

Frank Goodwin
Secretary
Eurocarers

Mariann Skar
Secretary General
European Alcohol Policy Alliance

Fintan Farrell
Director
European Anti-poverty Network
Ivan Ivanov  
Executive Director  
European Roma Information Unit

Freek Spinnewijn  
Director  
European Federation of National Organisations  
Working with the Homeless

Carola Fischbach-Pytel  
General Secretary  
European Public Service Union

Dr Claude Wetzel  
President  
European Federation of Salaried Doctors - FEMS

Professor Rabu Klaus  
President  
European Respiratory Society

Prof. Torsten Zuberbie  
Secretary General  
Global Allergy & Asthma European Network (GA²LEN)

Seamus Connolly  
Political Officer  
European Shiatsu Federation
Katrina Perehudoff
European Projects Manager
Health Action International (HAI) Europe

John Bowis
President
Health First Europe

Bodil Eriksson
Secretary General
The International Council on Social Welfare

Sophie Peresson
Regional Director
International Diabetes Federation European Region

Nicolai Paulsen
President of the European Region
International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

Florence Berteletti-Kemp
Smoke-Free Partnership

Panos Englezos
President
Thalassaemia International Federation
Dr Romuald Krajewski  
President  
Dr Edwin Borman  
Secretary General  
European Union of Medical Specialists  

David Gorria  
General Secretary  
European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapists

Trade Associations

Nicole Denjoy  
Secretary General  
European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry

Richard Bergström  
Director General  
European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industry Associations

Dr. Jürgen Schulze  
President  
European Diagnostic Manufacturers Association

Luciano Cattani,  
CEO  
European Association of Medical Technology Industry in Europe, (EUCOMED)
National or regional Organisations

Miguel Ángel Royo Bordonada
Coordinator
Spanish Interdisciplinary Committee on Cardiovascular Prevention

Carlos Artundo Purroy
CEO
Andalusian School of Public Health

Inna Krulko
Director
All-Ukrainian Association of Patients Rights Defense “Health of Nation

Panos Englezos
President
Cyprus Alliance for Rare Disorders

Zeljko Jakovic
President
Slatki Zivot

Alessandra Cerioli
Chair
Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro l’Aids
Sir Richard Thompson
President
Royal College of Physicians

Mihaela Lovse
President
Slovenian Coalition for Tobacco Control and Public Health

Miguel Ángel Royo Bordonada, MD, PhD
Academic Director
Spanish National School of Public Health

Fernando García Benavides
President
Spanish Association of Epidemiology
Institute of Health Carlos the Third

Individuals

Professor David Stuckler, MPH PhD
University of Cambridge

Professor Martin McKee, CBE MD
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Professor John R Ashton C.B.E
Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Cumbria and Cumbria County

Tamsin Rose
Independent Health Advocate