Programme for the Union's action in the field of health for the period 2021-2027 (“EU4Health Programme”)

2020/0102(COD) - 20/10/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted a report by Cristian-Silviu BUOI (EPP, RO) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health for the period 2021-2027 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 282/2014 (EU4Health Programme).

The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed several health systems to breaking point within and outside of the Union. While the Union´s action in the field of health is limited, a separate and robust Programme shall have the capacity to deliver on future pandemics and health threats, and very importantly, make EU health systems more resilient, able to face current weaknesses, such as medicine shortages, antimicrobial resistance, health inequalities and support health sector in the digital transition.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament’s position, adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure, should amend the Commission proposal as follows.

Budget

The proposed financial envelope for the implementation of the Programme for the period 2021-27 shall be ***EUR 10 398 000 000*** in current prices (EUR 9 370 000 000 in constant prices). This budget shall be frontloaded, meaning that there is a need for clear and focused objectives. The administrative expenses related to indirect actions shall not exceed 5% of the total amount under the Programme.

General objectives

Members stressed that a holistic approach is needed to improve health outcomes, and EU policy-makers should ensure that the principle of 'health in all policies' is applied in all policy-making. In this regard, the proposed Programme shall pursue, *inter alia*, the following general objectives, in keeping with this principle:

- improve and foster health in the Union, by supporting health promotion and disease prevention, reducing health inequalities and ensuring equal and full access to health;

- protect people in the Union from any serious cross-border threats to health;

- support the development and implementation of better preparedness and coordination within and between Member States as regards health emergencies;

- support existing and future Union legislation and policies to restore pharmaceutical independence and address shortages;

- strengthen the Union fight against cancer in synergy with the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, including by supporting actions for the surveillance, prevention, early diagnosis and treatment and care of cancer, including paediatric cancer;

- address vaccine hesitancy, and support action for the elimination of vaccine preventable diseases, including cancers.

Enhance European Reference Networks (ERNs)

Adequate funding shall be ensured to consolidate and expand the ERN model of cross-border healthcare by securing the provision of a range of clinical services through different channels, including online second opinions and specialist advice for patients on treatment and management and 'online out-patient' clinics. These networks shall be extended in the form of Excellence Networks in the field of communicable and noncommunicable diseases.

Communication portal

The report proposed the setting up of a communication portal for the public which would allow the Union to share validated information, send alerts to European citizens and fight against disinformation. This portal may also be used to promote, in cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Control ('ECDC'), a strong immunisation coverage at European level.

Synergies

A EU4Health Steering Board shall be created with a focus on creating synergies between the Programme and other programmes where a health dimension is integrated, through coordination and cooperation, promoting patients and society engagement, and providing scientific advice and recommendations.

The Commission shall propose a new Union strategic framework on occupational safety and health for the period 2021-2027 and continue updating the directive on the protection of workers from the risks related to carcinogens or mutagens at work.