



Deutscher Bundestag

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## Europe in the pandemic: research and innovation for a resilient health system

### Statement of the Chair

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The Interparliamentary Conference entitled “Europe in the pandemic: research and innovation for a resilient health system” was held on 7 September 2020 as part of the parliamentary dimension of the German Presidency of the Council. Because of the exceptional circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it took the form of a video conference. The participants were Members of Parliament from 21 EU member states, Members of the European Parliament and, as observers, Members of Parliament from Norway and the United Kingdom. The conference assessed the current state of play regarding the impact of the pandemic on the member states’ health systems and considered proposals for closer cooperation in the health sector, fresh ideas for the promotion of health research and ways of managing crises with the aid of digital instruments.

#### **We, the conference presidency,**

- express our solidarity with infected people throughout the world and with the hardest-hit countries; we declare our deep respect for the medical personnel and other staff in the various health systems; we emphasize the importance of protecting public health and of resilient health systems and are also aware that national parliaments bear a large share of responsibility for shaping their countries’ health systems;
- acknowledge the effective response, within the framework of the WHO recommendations, of the member states and the EU institutions, especially the Commission, to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; we advocate even closer local, national, European and international cooperation in the areas of health and research, from which prevention and the quality of medical care in all countries can benefit; solidarity and sovereignty should be the key concepts underlying this cooperation, which should also serve to facilitate future access to vaccines;
- regard it as core political task for the EU and its member states to ensure, even in crises, that the population is supplied at all times with essential medicinal products and medical equipment; to improve the coordination of responses to pandemic developments within the EU; we need more cooperation and better information exchange between member states;
- believe that increased use of digital technology, leading to better and faster data exchange and ultimately to a common European Health Data Space, are essential and should be targeted so that infection events can be identified; this also entails achieving compatibility between the various coronavirus apps; the potential and the utility of such apps depends

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heavily on whether the member states succeed in harnessing the existing technological solutions and in cooperating more effectively in this area;

- are convinced that the extension of testing and the assessment of infection risks are the first and crucial response to cross-border health hazards; the way in which infection statistics are treated must, however, be standardised on the basis of common criteria; for this reason, we advocate better preparation and coordination of joint crisis responses and support a reinforcement of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and its integration into an EU-wide reporting system;
- emphasize the need for more promotion of research and innovation; the EU and its member states can achieve more by pooling resources; if this is done, more benefit can be derived from the polarity between the focus on research excellence in some countries and the focus on needs-based research in others: importance is attached in this context to the ability to exchange research data in a trustworthy environment; more should be done to promote communication on the part of scientists so that disinformation can be counteracted; similarly, evaluative epidemiological research must receive due attention;
- endorse the calls made by scientists for a percentage of European research funding to be invested in the Global South, particularly in the training of scientists and especially of medical staff;
- agree that, besides a European strategy for the promotion of research, all EU member states should also have their own national strategies so that, as originally laid down in the Lisbon Strategy, over and above EU research funding, each member state must devote an amount corresponding to 3% of its GDP to research; it is more urgent than ever that this target be pursued, in some cases with the assistance of the private sector;
- welcome the fact that the EU rapidly made resources available for COVID-19 research in the spring of 2020 but regret that the Heads of State or Government have cut the planned funding increase for the EU4health programme and for the EU research and innovation investment programme Horizon Europe in the course of the Next Generation EU recovery instrument; we therefore support the calls from the European Parliament, made in connection with the forthcoming deliberations on the multiannual financial framework, for an increase in the resources made available for health research and for research in general; at the same time, national parliaments are called on to ensure that 3% of GDP is devoted to research in the member states.

For the conference presidency

**Erwin Rüdgel**

Chair of the Committee on Health

**Dr Ernst Dieter Rossmann**

Chair of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment

**Manuel Höferlin**

Chair of the Committee on the Digital Agenda