

Dear Mr Speaker,

In anticipation of your potential participation at the critical EU Health Policy Platform webinar regarding the COVID-19 health response package scheduled for 29th October ([link to program](#)), may we refer to our letter of 12th October 2020 to the European Parliament's Environment and Public Health Committee (ENVI) on this topic (attachment 1). Both the President of the European Parliament Mr David Sassoli and the President of the ENVI Committee Mr Pascal Canfin responded in writing, welcomed the letter, explained current understandings and prioritized actions – but avoided a direct response to the critical issue of the absence of EU-level top preparedness for any next pandemic (a new viral attack or indeed, as 30 MEPs recently suggested, a far worse Antimicrobial Resistance outbreak).

In his visionary [article](#) in The Guardian of 18th March 2018 *Dr Jonathan Quick (Harvard Medical School, Chair of the Global Health Council, author of The End of Epidemics)* forecasted the causes of a next pandemic. The first missing element: centralised political leadership. In EU terms only EU Heads of State and Government represent that, together with a strong dedicated structure, its own funding and an explicit mandate to act. Instead of more reactive and bureaucratic propositions there is a need for a 'joint forward defence' approach as served NATO for decades. In detail: there is no early and explicit warning system as was promoted already after the SARS outbreak; there is no central gathering and interpreting of reliable data as in the AMR case; there is no mandate to develop a common strategy and to act with an independent budget and staff on this strategy. Hence the proposal to transform the current Europe Health Security Committee (2013) into a Heads of State and Government body with its own Science and Civil Society Council and its own budget and staff (attachment 2). Of course, full coordination with all relevant new and existing bodies must be secured. *But even such a body will fail if the EU Member States continue to strategically depend on the production of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and drugs of non-European manufacturers.*

To end such strategic dependence, the European Commission has turned to its Pharmaceutical Committee. However, during its session on 21st October, *the Committee no longer referred to 'dependence' in terms of production, but rather to 'vulnerability of the supply chain'*. This may not end but increase strategic dependence. It cannot be overlooked what happened particularly in India as a consequence of being Europe's cheap source of APIs: dire environmental degradation, huge public health damage and indeed the death of 58,000 newborns per year in India alone (attachment 3: new PAI Report; attachments 4 and 5: letters of 2006 and 2007). Besides, the EU cannot develop new rules banning the import of products manufactured below EU standards and continue the import of such products just because they are pharmaceutical. The answer may be in public-private partnerships with European API and antibiotics producers.

May we express the hope that you will call on DG SANTE to assist the upcoming European Council meetings on the subject with developments in the above direction.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Mark Eyskens
Chairman
Former Prime Minister of
Belgium

RNDr. Pavel Poc
Vice Chairman
Former Member of the
European Parliament,
former Vice-Chair of ENVI

Rio Praaning Prawira Adiningrat
Secretary General

Attachments:

1. Open letter to ENVI, 12 October 2020
2. PowerPoint presentation: A New European Health Security Council or Prime Ministerial Committee, 28 September 2020
3. Memo 'Pharmaceutical production in India and EU's role', 27 October 2020
4. Letter of PA International Foundation to European Commissioner for External Trade Peter Mandelson, 12 July 2006
5. Reply letter of European Commission Vice President Günter Verheugen and European Commissioner for Health Markos Kyprianou, 10 January 2007

PA International Foundation
Franklinstraat 106-108, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: (+32)(0)2 735 83 96, Fax: (+32)(0)2 735 84 66
Email: info@pa-international.org
www.pa-international.org

The Coronavirus outbreak is a final warning: at all cost an outbreak of resistant bacteria (Antimicrobial Resistance - AMR) must be avoided. AMR kills 33,000 Europeans and 700,000 others every year. Please check out www.stopAMR.eu to help prevent a devastating AMR outbreak.

Disclaimer

1. This e-mail is for the intended recipient only. If you have received it by mistake please let us know by reply and then delete it from your system; access, disclosure, copying, distribution or reliance on any of it by anyone else is prohibited.
2. If you as intended recipient have received this e-mail incorrectly, please notify the sender (via e-mail) immediately. This e-mail is confidential and may be legally privileged. PA International does not guarantee that the information sent and/or received by or with this e-mail is correct and does not accept any liability for damages related thereto.