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Brussels, April 8, 2020

Current and future global health threats require increased health R&I budget

Dear Mr Ehler,

As a group of civil society organisations, research institutes, academia, and product development partnerships engaged in advancing global health, we are writing to you to ask you to support an **increased budget for the health cluster of the future research and innovation (R&I) framework programme, Horizon Europe.**

Europe is currently confronted with an unprecedented health crisis caused by the new Coronavirus COVID-19 which requires a coordinated and solidary response from the EU, its member states, and the international community, including in the area of R&I.

As unfortunately evidenced by the current COVID-19 outbreak, lack of **appropriate tools to diagnose, treat or prevent diseases** can have devastating health and economic consequences. Not only do crucial research and product gaps exist for previously unknown pathogens, but such gaps are also a sad reality for many diseases that do not offer sufficient market opportunities for private sector R&I investments, such as poverty-related and neglected diseases, or new antimicrobials that could address the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance. Potential vaccine or treatment candidates are not further developed due to limited commercial incentives. For example, this was the case with Ebola which was already on the radar, but investments were only made following the 2014 outbreak.

Given the current circumstances, maintaining or deprioritizing support to health R&I is not an option for Europe. Yet, the draft agreement for Horizon Europe foresees spending of only 8.2% of the overall Horizon Europe budget for the health cluster whereas under the current programme, Horizon 2020, the societal challenge focussing on health represents 9.7% of the overall budget. Other parts of the programme (e.g. the SME instrument) are likely to also contribute to health R&I, however, there is no guarantee for a minimum amount of funding (from outside the health cluster) that will focus on new knowledge and tools to address people's health needs. To address current and future health challenges, **Horizon Europe should prioritise health R&I in the same way as Horizon 2020 and earmark no less than 10% of the budget for the health cluster.**

We therefore urge you to support an increase of the budget proportion allocated to the health cluster in ongoing negotiations of the Horizon Europe legislative basis. Funding health R&I is an investment that saves lives, combats ongoing epidemics, can prevent future catastrophic outbreaks, delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals, and has a great economic return on investment for Europe, creating quality jobs and driving scientific excellence.

We are looking forward to receiving your feedback and are available for a call should you wish to discuss any of the above.

Signed by:

