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NEWSROOM

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Global Health Strategy: safeguarding health in every corner of the globe

The EU has shown its resilience and resolve in combating COVID-19, both at home and abroad. The pandemic was a wakeup call to the world that cooperation on health matters can only be a global effort. As part of this new direction, Director-General for Health and Food Safety, Sandra Gallina, looks ahead at the exciting possibilities brought on by the recently announced Global Health Strategy that will contribute to safeguarding health in every corner of the globe.

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Why an EU Global Health Strategy?

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that in a world where diseases know no borders, governments working alone to improve health is simply not workable.

Global health has become therefore our main priority as we collectively face new health challenges and a complex geopolitical reality in constant flux.

These include the yet unfinished agenda in global health, catching up on universal health targets which have slid backwards in many countries—and of course the challenge of addressing global health security swiftly and comprehensively so that we are better equipped to prevent or face pandemics and other threats in the future.

To face up to this, a new Global Health Strategy is needed now more than ever to provide a fresh, focused and fit-for-purpose EU health policy that will serve not only EU citizens but also the global community at large.

What are some of the Strategy's main areas of focus?

We must make up for the lost ground in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals by going back to basics. This means putting the focus on achieving universal health coverage, strengthening primary healthcare and public health, and tackling the root causes of ill-health. In doing so, we must exploit the potential of digitalisation and address the workforce challenge, while taking particular care of the health of women, girls, and vulnerable groups.

We must achieve a quantum leap in health security, to combat health threats more effectively than ever before, with a permanent mechanism that enhances equity in vaccines and other medical countermeasures; a global surveillance network which fully embodies One Health principles; and robust international rules, including enhanced measures to tackle anti-microbial resistance.

How will the Strategy achieve these goals?

We must work together to shape a new and effective enhanced global health order that helps us respond collectively to health threats and delivers better health for all.

This starts with more robust governance at home. We will leverage the Team Europe approach with a genuinely single and powerful voice, mobilising all policies (internal and external) to work for global health, and ensuring close coordination with Member States so political action and financial means are tied to the new priorities.

We will also support robust international governance. This starts with a strong, effective and accountable WHO at the core of the multilateral system—powered by a strong EU that has formal observer status. With the help of G7 and G20 work, we must also fill existing gaps in global governance with a permanent link between global health and finance efforts, sustained attention by top political leadership, and effective funding. We must also harness the impetus of global health stakeholders and private initiatives to advance common objectives—fighting duplication and ensuring coherence of action in the multilateral health system will allow a step change to ensure better health security globally.

Finally, our international partnerships will be expanded with the new Global Gateway focus based on co-ownership and co-responsibility by our partners to promote health sovereignty, more resilience and autonomy, allowing to target those most in need where our engagement can achieve highest impact, and to deliver on our health priorities, matching broader EU interests.

What role will the EU specially play?

The EU intends to reassert its responsibility, deepen its leadership, and reach out to others in the interest of the highest attainable standards of health: responsibility in keeping health at the top of the agenda, leadership in tackling all the hard issues head on, and sending a call to partners to support a robust multilateral system with the WHO at its core and partnerships based on genuine co-ownership.

Based on our fundamental principles of solidarity, equity, respect for human rights, and the trademark Team Europe approach with our Member States, we are ready to work with stakeholders and partners to achieve better health for all in a changing world.