



## Statement by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA)

### WHITE PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) welcomes the European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe as an opportunity to reflect on the direction that the European Union might take in the coming years. Recent events have shown how important it is that we continue, as Europeans, to work actively on the European project to enable it to survive and thrive for coming generations. We are proud to celebrate 60 years since the Treaty of Rome established the four freedoms as pillars of the European Union. Quality of life for European citizens has improved significantly over the past decades and today European citizens can expect to live around 80 years on average with most of their life being spent in good health. There is no doubt that this reflects the economic and social development that has been enabled by the European Union.

Yet it is increasingly clear that many people in Europe are struggling to live decently, while inequalities within and among Member States are widening. This has led many to question the added value of the European Union and to consider the future of the EU with outright scepticism.

EUPHA has no doubt at all that the European Union has contributed immensely to the health and well being of European citizens. This contribution has come about partly indirectly through the benefits of the European single market, underpinned by a regulatory infrastructure covering areas such as food safety and medicines. Important population health gains can be linked to measures adopted under the public health mandate, established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. Although this is a relatively young area of activity, the EU has led the way in terms of action on areas such as food safety, tobacco and communicable diseases. Much more, however, remains to be achieved.

EUPHA, along with a large number of European health organisations, adopted the the [Vienna Declaration](#)<sup>1</sup> at the European Public Health Conference in November 2016. This reviewed the many new challenges facing public health and highlighted the renewed impetus needed for measures to improve health and well-being of European citizens for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At a time when the determinants of health (or ill-health), have become globalised, the effort to tackle these unhealthy influences, which lead to much chronic illness and disability, must equally lie at a supra national level. All European countries face challenges related to demographic change, migration and climate change. EUPHA notes with satisfaction that the White Paper proposes that the EU leads the way in

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<sup>1</sup> The Vienna declaration on Public Health. M Mckee, D Stuckler, D Zeegers Paget, T Dorner. Eur J Public Health (2016) 26 (6): 897-898. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckw194>



addressing policy on climate change. However, it is extremely disappointed that public health has been used as an example of an area where the EU should consider doing less.

As the EU institutions embark on a process to reengage with European citizens, we cannot understand how the White Paper proposes to do less on public health, when the health is a matter that European citizens cherish dearly and a policy area that emerges as a top concern for European citizens, time after time. We believe strongly that the EU should actually strengthen its remit in relation to communicable diseases and substantially broaden its remit in addressing other public health priorities, including non-communicable diseases.

EUPHA also acknowledges that, while the EU must respect the competence of Member States, health systems everywhere are facing similar challenges. These challenges arise from developments in medicine and evolution in the global industry supply chain. Few can be resolved by the actions of individual countries but require concerted and coordinated action at EU level. In this area, EUPHA believes that the option of moving forward at different speeds offers a means to meet the diverse needs of health systems across Europe.

Finally, EUPHA calls upon the EU institutions to ensure that public health and health systems research are given due importance in order to enable European solutions, informed by evidence, to assist policy making in these challenging times.

**Note to editors:** The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations and institutes in Europe. EUPHA was founded in 1992. EUPHA now has 71 members from 41 countries: • 40 national associations of public health • 18 institutional members • 9 European NGOs • 4 individual members. EUPHA is an international, multidisciplinary, scientific organisation, bringing together around 14,000 public health experts for professional exchange and collaboration throughout Europe. We encourage a multidisciplinary approach to public health. Our vision is of improved health and reduced health inequalities for all Europeans. We seek to support our members to increase the impact of public health in Europe, adding value to the efforts of regions and states, national and international organisations, and individual public health experts.