

European Commission
Ms Stella KYRIAKIDES, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
Mr Nicolas SCHMIT, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight
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cc: Mr Dragoș Pîslaru, Chair Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) & Mr Pascal CANFIN, Chair Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)
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cc: Mr Olivier Véran, ministre des Solidarités et de la Santé France & Mr Vlastimil Válek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health Czech Republic
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Brussels, 13 May 2022

Dear Commissioners Kyriakides, Schmit and Šefčovič,

As the European federation of public service unions (EPSU) organising millions of workers in health and social care across Europe, we write to you regarding the follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) recommendations on health and social care that have been delivered to the Presidents of the EU institutions.

The recommendations reinforce many of the demands that EPSU has made over the years regarding improving the access of everyone to high quality health and social care. They reflect an expectation that Europe can - and must - deliver on equal and universal access to affordable, preventive, curative and quality healthcare.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed underlying long-term problems in the health and social care sector with almost daily images of high death tolls and struggling health and care workers in long term care facilities and hospitals. Today we see chronic staff shortages in the health and social care sector and long-waiting lists for treatment in many countries. This crisis underlines the fact that safe staffing levels, good working conditions, strong collective bargaining and social dialogue in health and social care are necessary and intrinsic ingredients - not an afterthought - of policies to ensure high quality care for all.

The recommendations on health and social care that have come out of the CoFoE call on Europe to deliver on equal and universal access to affordable, preventive, curative and quality healthcare. This requires a joined-up and coordinated approach by the EU and Member States to strengthen our public health systems. It does require high levels of public spending and investment, but as the

CoFoE underlines, this investment should go to support public and not-for-profit health and social care. The CoFoE recommendations also call on all care providers to respect the principles of full accessibility, affordability and quality of services and, thereby ensuring that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest. These expectations are explicit in recommendation 8.5.


The ‘permanent institutional and policy framework’ called for in the EP Resolution - 4 May 2022.pdf to follow-up on the CoFoE recommendations must take account of the CoFoE recommendations to put public good before private profit. (Re)orientating our health and social care systems towards the public good and away from private profit is fundamental to delivering high quality care for all. Citizens, the COVI committee in the European Parliament, EPSU and many national parliaments understand that promoting health and social care on a for-profit basis is at odds with the goal of a more equal society. Europe can no longer be silent - or at worst complicit - in allowing health and social care to become a business – with profits to be plucked by the few – instead of a public service where everyone shares the risks and benefits of contributing to good health for all.

Ms von der Leyen has confirmed that she will specify what the Commission intends to do to implement the Conference’s proposals in mid-September during her State of the Union speech. EPSU expects to see the CoFoE recommendations to strengthen our public and non-for-profit health systems and to tackle the commercialisation of healthcare reflected in the Commission’s plan. Europe has a mandate from citizens to promote and protect – politically and financially - public and not-for-profit health and social care as a human right. This is also what workers and citizens expect of the upcoming European Care Strategy – a commitment to well-funded public services. Furthermore, all Member States including those that have expressed some concerns over Treaty changes (letter <https://aeur.eu/f/1k5>) agree that “What matters is that we address the citizens’ ideas and concerns”. We agree absolutely.

The 12 May is international nursing day. EPSU celebrates the work of millions of nurses and care workers in the private, non-for-profit and for-profit sector. EPSU is proud to organise these workers across the board and in whatever workplace they are. But we are very clear that for everyone to have access to the care they need, whatever their social status and where they happen live, risk-sharing and solidarity-based systems are needed to ensure efficient and fair resource allocation. It is time for Europe to be clear on this too.

EPSU stands by to actively to support Europe build the fair, inclusive policy framework on health and social care that is needed.

Kind regards,



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary