

## Making chronic disease prevention matter in Europe – ECDA’s statement ahead of the EU institutions’ vote on the EU4Health programme

8<sup>th</sup> of March 2021

***Prevention is a priority in the EU4Health programme, as it should be. ECDA calls on the European Parliament to adopt the provisional agreement of December 2020 to ensure that the Programme can rapidly assume its mission of further preventing diseases and promoting health in Europe.***

EU institutions reached a long-awaited deal on the EU4Health programme on 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2020, with an agreed budget of €5.1 million. This provisional agreement is an important building block in the creation of a European Health Union.

The ECDA welcomes the inclusion of prevention as a priority, with at least 20% of the budget reserved for health promotion and disease prevention by addressing risk factors such as tobacco use and harmful alcohol consumption. As the burden of chronic diseases continues to rise and prevention remains the most cost-effective way of reducing premature mortality and DALYs, this decision should bring long-lasting benefits across the EU.

According to ECDA Chairman Prof. Vanholder, *“Chronic diseases share common preventable risk factors. The priority on prevention in the EU4Health deal is a landmark step towards a healthier and more sustainable Europe. The multifaceted impact of chronic diseases on the EU’s population, societies and economies require that policymakers adopt robust measures and budgets. We welcome this strong commitment to improving the response to chronic diseases, while building more resilient healthcare systems”*.

There is no single EU Member State which is not affected by the challenge of chronic diseases. The EU4Health programme will allow the EU to support efforts in a coordinated way while responding to specific needs.

While the EU4Health programme is part of the EU’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the deal illustrates the fact that the WHO’s recommendation to stimulate chronic disease prevention and control as part of COVID-19 recovery and investment plans is acted upon at EU level.

The extension of the European Reference Networks (ERNs) to chronic (non-communicable) diseases and the reinforcement of the mandate of the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) will support this goal, and contribute to a future-proof European Health Union. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the many links between communicable and non-communicable diseases; and the need to review mechanisms for data collection, surveillance and monitoring of chronic diseases at EU-level to ensure optimal prevention, treatment and care.

Further, strengthened involvement of civil society in the governance of the Programme will ensure greater synergies between actions and patients’ needs.

ECDA encourages the institutions to ratify the EU4Health deal, in order to implement the programme as soon as possible; and stands ready to support the shaping of annual work programmes.