

Dr. Ursula Von der Leyen  
President-Elect of the European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200, 1000 Brussels

Brussels, 29th July 2019

**SUBJECT: Cooperation and action in the health field, the European Commission mandate 2019-2024**

Dear Dr. Von der Leyen,

On behalf of the [European Chronic Disease Alliance \(ECDA\)](#), I would like to express our congratulations on your appointment as Commission President for the 2019–2024 term. Your commitments to climate action, to a full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and to the set up of a European plan against cancer are meaningful steps towards a healthier Europe.

The ECDA would like to **raise your attention to the importance of complementing these actions with dedicated policies addressing chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as a whole**, including the issue of co-morbidities. This implies investing in health promotion and preventing the premature onset of diseases, by tackling risk factors which are common to the majority of NCDs.

Given your professional background as a physician, we trust you will understand the central role that good health plays in building inclusive, competitive societies and a productive workforce, which are all prerequisites for a strong and sustainable economy.

Health is a main concern for European citizens, and 70% of them favour more EU action. In particular, NCDs have a high impact on individuals, while incurring significant societal and economic costs. Strong EU commitment targeting NCDs is thus a pre-requisite for improving the health of millions of EU citizens. It will sustain or contribute to progress in other areas such as reducing inequality and eradicating poverty, productive employment, climate change, industrial growth and innovation.

The EU was built on values which place its citizens at the centre. It has been a pioneer in resolving major challenges and it has recognised that sustainable development in Europe can only happen if human and social dimensions are part and parcel of economic policies.

Past European Commission mandates have established important policy frameworks to improve citizens' health. **We are looking to you to ensure that a considerable impetus is given to action in health, with a strategic approach embedding health considerations across sectors; and to improved prevention of NCDs.** The European Union has the means and the legal competence needed. **We believe this necessitates a composition and structure of the incoming European Commission that provides a dedicated “policy home” for health and political leadership.**

Our organisation is eager to continue the dialogue with you and remains fully committed to cooperate and share knowledge to support the work of the European Commission 2019–2024.

We thank you for your consideration and trust that you will join us in continuing to build a European Union which not only is a leader in innovation, creates economic growth and security, but also aspires to respond to citizens' wishes for and confidence in a healthy future. Health deserves political dedication from the highest levels.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Em. Raymond Vanholder  
Chairman, On behalf of the European Chronic Diseases Alliance (ECDA)



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**About the European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA):**

*The European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA) is a Brussels-based coalition of 10 European health organizations representing major chronic diseases and sharing the same interests in combating preventable chronic diseases through European policies that impact health. Together, we represent over millions of patients and over 200,000 health professionals.*

*ECDA plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of chronic diseases by providing policy recommendations based on contemporary evidence. Its main priorities are primary and secondary prevention related to chronic diseases and the common risk factors - tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, and environmental factors.*

*Members of the Alliance:*

- *European Academy of Allergy & Clinical Immunology (EAACI)*
- *European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)*
- *European CanCer Organisation (ECCO)*
- *European Heart Network (EHN)*
- *European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA)*
- *European Respiratory Society (ERS)*
- *European Society of Cardiology (ESC)*
- *European Society of Hypertension (ESH)*
- *European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO)*
- *International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)*

*For more information, please visit: [www.alliancechronicdiseases.org](http://www.alliancechronicdiseases.org)*

**About non-communicable chronic diseases:**

Chronic diseases (such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, chronic liver disease, allergy or hypertension) are by far the leading cause of mortality in Europe, representing 77% of the total disease burden and 86% of all deaths. Every year in the EU, 550,000 people of working age die prematurely from the four major chronic diseases, with significant economic and societal costs. One-third of the European population aged 15 and over lives with a chronic disease, affecting people of working-age (23.5%), Europeans aged 65 and older (more than 80%) as well as younger generations. These diseases are linked by common risk factors and determinants, which provide opportunities for impactful cross-sectoral interventions. Greater prevention, early detection and appropriate management would contribute to improving outcomes for patients, reducing the overall incidence of chronic diseases, while ensuring the sustainability of healthcare systems and the economy.