

Commissioner Stella Kyriakides

29 September 2021

Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200

1049 Brussels

Belgium

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

To mark World Heart Day this year, we are writing to request that the EU4Health 2022 Work Programme includes a Joint Action on Structural Heart Diseases.

Structural heart diseases, an important sub-set of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), are cardiac defects that demand repair and/or replacement of heart valves such as aortic valve stenosis, mitral valve and tricuspid valve regurgitation. It is estimated that by 2040, 20 million EU citizens will have a structural heart disease. These diseases can be treated when detected in time.

CVD early detection and treatment in general have not featured prominently in EU policies in recent years and the EU4health 2022 programme would be an effective instrument to begin to rectify this.

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on untreated heart conditions in a very unwelcome manner. Cardiovascular disease is the number one long-term consequence of COVID-19, and patients with cardiovascular disease are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 complications.

By drastically reducing the number of un-diagnosed patients with structural heart disease we can contribute to the goal of better **pandemic preparedness**, mitigating the damage similar pandemics can do by reducing the size of the most vulnerable risk group.

A Joint Action would also contribute to **tackling age discrimination and reducing inequalities**. Age discrimination is particularly acute in cardiovascular disease. This discrimination has direct medical outcomes with older patients receiving poorer quality treatments than their younger counterparts and screened less often despite being far more at risk.

In order to effectively meet this challenge, we need to face up to a statistical and cultural reality. The statistical reality is that we will have an ever-increasing percentage of EU citizens with structural heart diseases in the coming years making us more vulnerable to pandemics. Our cultural reality is that these conditions will continue to be underdiagnosed, undertreated or outright dismissed as “part of getting old”.

Together we could create a better reality for our citizens. A simple electronic stethoscope check can help ensure that no EU citizen dies due to a lack of a heart health check. Registries for age related heart diseases can help us better understand problems, making our remedies that much more effective. The **digital solutions** exist today, we simply need to deploy them.

We have an opportunity here to invest in our own future where older citizens are treated according to their risk and not dismissed because of their age, an opportunity to face the next pandemic with greater resilience.

Annexed to this letter, please find attached a draft call text for consideration by your team that may serve as inspiration in developing the Eu4health 2022 work programme.

Will you build on the strides you have made in the field of health promotion and disease prevention, and support the inclusion of structural heart diseases that are part of Europe's number 1 killer in the EU4health 2022 work programme?

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Signatories:

France:

Handwritten signature of Annie Vidal in blue ink.

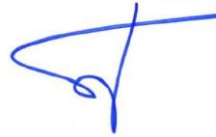
Annie VIDAL

Member of the
National Assembly

Handwritten signature of Agnès Firmin Le Bodo in blue ink.

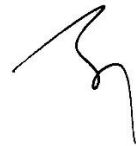
Agnès FIRMIN LE BODO

Member of the National
Assembly

Handwritten signature of Paul Christophe in blue ink.

Paul CHRISTOPHE

Member of the National
Assembly

Handwritten signature of Bernard Bonne in blue ink.

Bernard BONNE

Member of the Senate

Spain:

Handwritten signature of Esther Carmona in blue ink.

Esther CARMONA

Senator, Spokesperson for Health

Handwritten signature of Elvira Velasco in blue ink.

Elvira VELASCO

Member of the Congress, GPP Spokesperson for Health

Italy:

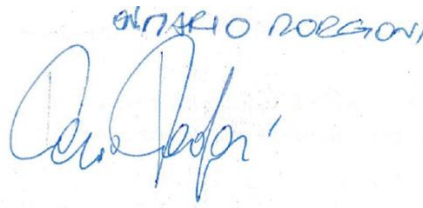
On. Vito De Filippo
Componente Gruppo PD
Commissione XII Affari Sociali
Camera dei Deputati



Vito DE FILIPPO

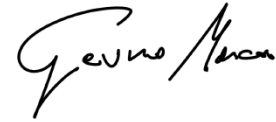
Member of the Health
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Deputies

MARIO MORGONI



Mario MORGONI

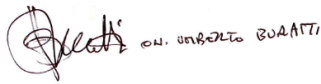
Member of the Chamber of Deputies



Gavino MANCA

Member of the Chamber of Deputies

ON. UMBERTO BURATTI



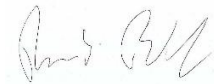
Umberto BURATTI

Member of the Chamber of Deputies



Roberto BAGNASCO

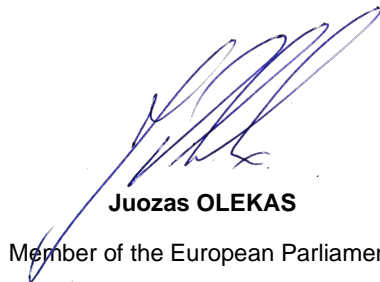
Member of the Health Committee,
Chamber of Deputies



Brando BENIFEI

Member of the European Parliament

Lithuania:



Juozas OLEKAS

Member of the European Parliament

Portugal:



Maria DA GRACA CARVALHO

Member of the European Parliament