

European Commission
Secretariat General
President Jean-Claude Juncker
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
B - 1049 Brussels
Belgium

CC: European Commission
Directorate General for Health and Food Safety
Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis
B - 1049 Brussels
Belgium

Berlin, September 14, 2015

Dear President Juncker,

We are writing to you in our capacity as representatives of civil society organisations and communities which share an interest in achieving a concerted response to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB) and viral Hepatitis in Europe. We have noted with great concern that health in general, and HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis in particular have slipped down on the agenda of the European Commission.

This is a particularly unsettling development considering the following data: HIV remains one of the biggest Public Health concerns across the European Union with an increasing number of infections in the key population of men who have sex with men (MSM), a quarter of the global multi-drug resistant TB burden is concentrated in the WHO European Region and in this same region an estimated 11.3 million people live with Hepatitis C.

Recent regional political events held under the Italian and the Latvian Presidency of the EU, such as the Ministerial Conference on HIV in Rome in October 2014 and the Ministerial Conference on TB and its multi-drug resistance in Riga in March 2015, instilled some hope in civil society organisations for a greater regional political commitment in this area. The Slovak government has also indicated that emphasis will be placed on communicable diseases during their Presidency of the EU Council in 2016, which is promising.

Nevertheless, the EU still lacks a comprehensive and updated policy framework which coherently addresses HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis and reflects the competences of the EU Institutions and Member States in this field and allows for effective internal and external policies.

In fact, the current EU HIV Action Plan will end in 2016. The EU TB Framework Action Plan, which is not of political nature, dates back to 2008 and urgently needs to be updated. On top of that, no regional policy framework exists on Hepatitis C. Most importantly, since these diseases are of a cross-border nature, any new regional policy framework should be developed together with Eastern Partnership countries – as is currently the case with the HIV Action Plan.

While we welcome Commissioner Andriukaitis' proposal to develop an integrated European Commission policy on HIV, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis, we call on you, Mr President, to ensure that the European Commission immediately starts working on a comprehensive EU-Eastern Partnership Policy Framework, which will pave the way for HIV, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis elimination in both the EU and the Eastern neighbourhood.

Please note that we will also reach out to the European Parliament's Committee on Environment Public Health and Food Safety to organise a hearing on HIV, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis in 2016 in the context of a policy framework at the Commission level and the WHO and UNAIDS 2016-2021 strategies. We firmly believe that combined action and policy coordination across the different key stakeholders in the European Union will result in better and more sustainable results in these key areas of public health.

Mr. President, we would like to emphasise that European civil society organisations continue to be prepared and willing to assist you in these efforts. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis know no borders and represent a true risk to the fabric and health of our societies. These complex tasks require complex solutions, but the precious experience and knowledge accumulated and increased collaboration will allow us to address the challenges that infectious diseases pose for our region. What we need first and foremost is your political leadership and support.

Sincerely yours,

European Civil Society Organisations in the field of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and viral Hepatitis:



EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

AIDS Action Europe



European AIDS Treatment Group



Stop AIDS Alliance



TB Europe Coalition



Correlation – European Network Social Inclusion & Health



Coalition Internationale SIDA

European Liver Patients Association



ELPA – European Liver Patients Association