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CC: Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Brussels, 22 September

Dear Vice-President Timmermans,

As organisations working in Europe, from the community, patients, civil society, research and clinical perspectives, to address the needs of persons affected by viral hepatitis, HIV and tuberculosis, we welcome the commitment of the EU and its member states to the Sustainable Development Goals and the political declaration at the UN High-level Meeting on Ending AIDS, the recently adopted WHO health sector action plans on HIV and viral hepatitis for Europe, as well as the WHO action plan on tuberculosis.

We are writing to call on the EU to affirm its specific contribution to ending these epidemics inside the EU and beyond.

Europe is at a critical juncture. The hepatitis B and C, HIV and tuberculosis epidemics are major contributors to the disease burden and loss of lives in Europe and cannot be contained within national boundaries. They account for important health inequalities across the region and within countries. The European region, in particular in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, has the fastest growing HIV and HCV epidemics and the highest rates and spread of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) globally. EU countries have made great strides in tackling the epidemics but they continue to face challenges in ensuring comprehensive access to prevention, treatment and care for populations that are disproportionately affected by the epidemics<sup>1</sup>. However, recent major scientific advancements, and a wealth of experience in dealing with HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis have opened opportunities to end these epidemics as threats of public health importance by 2030.

We are calling for an **EU level strategy underpinned by EU member states' political agreement and a comprehensive European Commission Action Plan** as one of the essential tools to achieve these objectives. We firmly believe that the EU will thereby deliver for the well-being of populations, to reduce health inequalities and to strengthen public health systems in Europe.

An EU policy framework will usefully complement national actions by fostering concerted action where appropriate; by tackling cross-border problems; by facilitating the exchange of information and by identifying effective measures and best practices. Given the overlap of diseases in a number of countries and affected populations, exploiting synergies in approaches in prevention, testing and

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<sup>1</sup> See WHO Action Plans for the health sector response to HIV and viral hepatitis in the WHO European Region, adopted on 14 September 2016 <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/66th-session/documentation>

care programmes, while treating the diseases in their own right, can bring significant positive change.

We also call on the support of the European Commission for a renewed **UN-supported declaration** and a successful **World AIDS Conference in Amsterdam in 2018**.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposal in more depth with you. We thank the Commission for its work and the Slovak EU Presidency for organizing a debate at the informal meeting of Ministers of Health on 3-4 October 2016 in Bratislava. We are actively promoting the engagement of our respective governments for a new integrated policy framework at EU level on these inter-related epidemics.

Sincerely,

Signatories

1. AIDS Action Europe



2. Correlation



3. East Europe and Central Asia  
Union of People Living with  
HIV



4. EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society  
Forum



5. Eurasian Harm reduction  
Network



6. European AIDS Clinical  
Society



7. European AIDS Treatment  
Group



8. European Liver Patients  
Association



9. European Public Health Alliance



10. European Respiratory Society



11. Global Network of People Living with HIV



12. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association- Europe region



13. International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network



14. Network of Low HIV Prevalence Countries in Central and South East Europe



15. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants



16. Stop AIDS Alliance



17. World Hepatitis Alliance

