



Webinar Notes

A United Voice: Towards a New European Strategy for Global Health

The webinar has been organised in close cooperation between EHFG and Santé Mondiale 2030, supported by the French Ministry of Health and Solidarity.

Ilona Kickbusch

Welcome to this historic event - when we first planned this event, we did not know what would happen at the G7 and at the G7, commissioner Stella Kyriakides of the EU commission announced a new EU global health strategy - something that many have called for over a long period of years.

With this webinar, we are probably one of the first groups to discuss this in a wide audience and we have to -Shift from advocacy to the hard stuff - being clear what such a strategy should achieve and what its contents and impacts should be.

Several of the recent presidencies have contributed to make this possible and a working group was established by Finland and Germany and all the following presidencies have continued to have global health on their agenda. Two of these presidencies are speaking this afternoon- France represented by Christine Berling and Slovenia represented by Andrej Martin Vujkovic who is an advisor at the Ministry of Health.

We have very large audience and there is great interest in this subject

Michel Kazatchkine: Will set the scene and discuss why Europe needs a strong global health strategy and where exactly are we now

We all welcome this decision of the commission to develop this new global health strategy. Many have been working on this and advocating for it for years including the French presidency, who has set it from the beginning as its number one priority.

Why is this strategy needed?

The first and overarching reason is the strongly acknowledged need for Europe to have an agreed set of principles and priorities to guide its actions and investments in global health. For the

commission and member states, the need to speak one voice in multilateral fora and in all global decision making processes in health.

-Just as the EU is paving the way to an internal European Health Union it should also build its external face as a strong and united interlocutor and actor in global health

Another reason is the full recognition by Europe that national and regional health are tightly interlinked with global health, the COVID-19 pandemic has anchored this concept- no one is safe until everyone is safe and the pandemic has prompted a number of joint initiatives and joint strategic reorientations within the EU. But Global health is of course significant beyond just the pandemic – health transcends borders in many ways and many health issues can only be addressed through global collective action.

- Most of the social, economic, environmental, global determinants of health are interdependent with other sectors such as One Health, climate change, security, trade and economic policies. We have a good precedence in Europe of joint strategic commitments - strategy of EU in climate change such as the decision to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris agreement.

-Adopting a strategy will also allow the EU to defend the values it holds in the global arena – values of the universal human rights framework, those of equity, solidarity and cooperation and Europe’s commitment to multilateral dialogue. The voice of the EU needs to be forceful on these values

-A robust EU strategy will help further shape Europe’s development assistance and build international partnerships in health particularly with Africa and Eastern Europe.

-Major changes that global health and geopolitics have undergone since 2010 when EU member states and institutions first agreed to “act together on global health in all relevant internal and external policies and actions.” This decision predated the Sustainable development goals, the outbreaks of Ebola, the Paris agreements on climate, and the COVID Pandemic. Changes that will profoundly impact how Europe will position itself to address key issues in global health.

-In the press conference that followed the joint meeting of of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Health last February, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs said, “Global health is a geopolitical issue” that maybe is one of the main reasons why Europe, particularly in today’s global context, needs a global health strategy.

Andrej Martin Vujkovic -Slovenian Presidency

What steps were taken during the Slovenian presidency to move this agenda forward?

Busy time for global health during the presidency.

-Had a few productive discussions -

Highlights:

-WHO regional committee in September. Particularly point out the adoption of the report of the European commission on health and sustainable development which strongly recommends several actions including investments in health strengthening both nationally and globally. Received high political support including from Slovenian Prime Minister at the time.

-October - 2 events organized by the Slovenian Presidency –one on strengthening health systems world-wide - what is next for the EU global health approach and virtual conference on the role of the EU in strengthening health systems globally - key theme of the Slovenian presidency.

-Key takeaway from these sessions was that focusing on health systems is often a forgotten but fundamental aspect of global health.

-End of November - historic event in Geneva – special session of the World Health Assembly dedicated to developing a new WHO convention agreement. The EU was really the engine behind making this happen.

-December – council conclusions with a specific section on global health titled “Strengthening the European Health Union: the Role of the EU in Global Health” –conclusion capturing well the main content elements that have emerged during the presidency.

-Investments in global health also highlighted during the course of the presidency and this can be found in different forms - investing in internal resources

-Collaboration and partnerships within the member states of the EU but also beyond and also non-state actors, who are an important stakeholder. Need to be open to wide and diverse partnerships especially with technical issues like One Health and antimicrobial resistance to name a few.

-Work done can help to identify priorities.

Christine Berling (Head of International & European Affairs. Directorate General for Health - Ministry of Health and Prevention)

-Strengthening European leadership in global health was at the forefront of our presidency.

-All the Ministers during the Joint Ministerial Conference convened with Health & Foreign Affairs Ministers in February in Lyon acknowledged the need to endow Europe with a stronger voice and to revise the EU global health strategy

- they reiterated their commitment as Europe to strengthen the multilateral health architecture with WHO at the center

-Delighted that the European commission announced the work towards the renewal of the strategy and the ambition to deliver this by the end of this year.

- the political work on the revision will start at the council minister meeting on 14 June where the minister will frame the ambition and the goals and will define the headlines of this new strategy.

-Strongly believe that the new strategy will have to offer a strong and innovative European vision
- will have to grasp the long-term climate and environmental challenges and convey our values and social goals.

-To develop this multi sectoral approach to health, we will need to engage research, trade, and economic sectors, in view of implementing health in all policies.

-need to define flagship initiatives and bold actions that will represent the European signature in global health – in areas like mental health, digital health, access to care, health emergency, migrant, and refugee health, to name a few.

-The new strategy should also have an overarching frame and governing system where member states will have to coordinate their own national priorities in global health.

- the new strategy should involve all stakeholders in a common narrative and that the strategy will be grounded in the development of partnership and rules-based cooperation

Ilona Kickbusch: Point to highlight is that the strategy is both a coordination mechanism within Europe and within the commission but also to link national strategies with European and global strategies

Louis Pizarro: Idea for the panel was to bring different perspectives on how this historic moment will become concrete and want to discuss with all the panellists how this strategy will happen, what the process will look like and what the content will be.

5 panellists

Anders Nordström, Swedish Ambassador for Global Health at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm

Historical perspective of where we come from (2010) - the first EU global health strategy (MDG approach) and the priorities we would like to see.

-A lot has happened since 2010

-2010 - MDG era therefore communication and strategy was very influenced by the MDGs - which in some ways was very successful - clear goals and targets focused on maternal and child mortality - in the in last 20 years mortality in those areas decreased by more than 50% - big success but still was an unfinished agenda.

-Need to get the perspective right of what is affecting people's health today - big picture is the transition across the world to non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

-People dying prematurely from the combination of NCDs, maternal mortality and child mortality. 85% dying in low- and middle-income countries.

-Lower socio-economic groups mostly affected in Europe and the transition is also happening rapidly in low and middle income

-Therefore, need a strategy that relates with both epidemiological realities - what are the problems and the underlying trends.

-Learned a lot of the pandemic. Someone was saying that the pandemic has been a success for evidence and research and a failure for politics - a lot to unpack in that.

-Sweden preparing for presidency in 2023 - strong interest in global health

-Need a strategy that builds on Agenda 2030 with the understanding of joint responsibility for all countries across the world - no longer just about aid. Development assistance is important, but we are now faced with climate and other challenges and risks. We need a strategy that is based on WHO's three pillars.

-The third pillar (and maybe the most difficult and important) is to recognize the social determinants of health and how that impacts risk factors.

-We have also seen strong regional models over the years. The EU has to work hand in hand with the African Union who has a stronger political engagement and capacity for health and the same thing for us here and for the Americans. Therefore, from the EU perspective, we need to think about what we are doing at the national level, regionally and globally.

Francisco Perez Canado - joined the European Commission as an advisor

-Decision Webinar could not have come at a better time.

-2 commissioners co- leading the work underscores the nexus between health and development but also with other areas

Some questions that we are thinking about:

-We have been focusing in the last few years on the pandemic, and of course this forms the basis of any strong preparedness and response policy. But we need to look beyond this to the broader objective of promoting and protecting health and combatting health threats

-Therefore, need to focus on priorities

4-5 Questions come to mind:

Should we not refocus priority on health strengthening (fundamental to any global health agenda) and better health (UHC)?

-How do we bring together the One-health approach

-Interconnectedness - how do we bring it into the process?

-Issue of equity as fundamental - how to address it?

More questions:

- How to project EU leadership? Fundamental. -Need to lead by example in our values
- How to enhance coordination to speak with one powerful voice?
- Not just building a new global health architecture, but a new global health order. How to shape it? How to best support multilateralism? with the WHO at it' core
- How to complement that with work with plurilateral organizations - G7, G20?
- How to best engage with a myriad of partners?
- How to ensure sustainable financing that delivers our goals? (need to link actions with priorities)
- How to monitor all of this? and how do we ensure that we stay on track?

Obiageli "Oby" Ezekwesili: Senior economic advisor for the Africa Economic Development Policy Initiative

- Important of getting perspectives out of the EU
- Every conversation around what Europe is trying to forge around global health policy it is necessary to include Africa
- The first thing to establish - we cannot imagine a global health policy that assumes the insularity approach that we always love in the world of multilateral relationships. We cannot stick to health and build a silo around it no matter how fantastic the policy would turn out to be. Assuming that we are able to have shared values amongst the EU countries and they actually came together around a policy that is acceptable to Europe, how about all the other issues that are related to the state of our multilateral order?
- Belief that the number one thing to establish is the contextual environment with which this conversation is happening.
- The aftermath of the pandemic clearly points us to the fact that health is economy and economy is health. The era where health practitioners could have the solution of health issues without being mindful of how it links to security issues, to issues of the economy, or geopolitics, that era is gone.
- Important to identify lessons of pandemic in terms of the relationship of Europe with Africa and the rest of the world within the context of a broken multilateral order.
- There is a whole knowledge agenda that is important for global health - has to be inclusive in the way that Europe shapes its global health policy, there needs to be that inclusivity underpinning rationale and evidence that will guide the direction that global health policy should go. That would call attention to the challenges of the economic disparities that have to be considered – financing global health in a way that health is not the exclusive preserve of societies that have the economic strength to provide a threshold of health services to their people
- How to deal with sharp inequalities within and across borders in relation to how the consequences of global health challenges touch on the poor more disproportionately. How do we insulate against the deeper challenges of inequality?
- To discuss the global health policy issues it is important to acknowledge that we must look at existing international systems and tell ourselves the truth of whether they serve us well
- Accept that the UN systems are facing their sell by date - if we do not have multilateral institutions that are organized on the basis of global governance that is equitable, we kid ourselves that a health policy that is designed by Europe in this existing construct that do not include inclusive governance would do well for us.
- I do not think of informing on the margin. I am calling for a redesign of our multilateral order. We have to re-imagine and re-design.

Gian Marco Grindatto, Senior Advocacy Officer, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)-

3 main points:

- Happy to now be able to focus on content
 1. **Process** that should lead to the adoption of the new strategy
 2. **Content** what the strategy should look like
 3. **Implementation**

Process:

- New strategy should be informed by meaningful and inclusive multi stakeholder consultations including from actors in low- and middle-income countries.
- Global health policy forum (21 June) will be a welcome first step in that direction.
- Ensure long term and regular consultations between the EU commission and civil society
- Civil society and communities should have a key role in the development and in the implementation of the policy, especially reflecting the needs of communities and populations living in marginalized and vulnerable settings
- European parliament - should have a critical role in development, implementation and evaluation of the strategy
- EU delegation should be encouraged to participate

Content:

- Overall objective should be to strengthen health systems and to achieve UHC, leaving no one behind.
- Strategy should take on a strong rights-based approach – applying for example a strong gender lens to different elements and priorities of the strategy.
- Strategy should act as a tool to coordinate all actors of the EU institutions in global health (trade, immigration, water, climate)
- Important for all relevant departments to be involved in both the implementation and the development of the strategy
- Any strategy is as strong as its weakest link. Therefore the strategy should tackle the key persisting neglected emerging global health challenges that were largely absent from 2010 framework such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, antimicrobial resistance, poverty related diseases
- Needs to be translated into a stronger plan of action backed by a strong monitoring and evaluation system and backed by robust funding mechanisms. Scale up health ODA (EU lagging behind compared to other donors)

Alena Steflova, Medical Faculty of Charles University, Prague- MOH

- Czech Republic taking the presidency of the EU after the French this semester
- How Czech presidency can contribute to the process
- Document expected to be prepared for broad discussions and public consultations - especially to ensure that all countries will have the same opportunity to comment.
- Czech presidency intends to cooperate with French colleagues on the design of proposal actions and is committed to a very active collaboration with the EU Commission on communication.
- Respect that the process will continue after the Czech presidency
- Guarantee that the strategy will be aligned with the opinion of the standing and regional committee to the WHO regional office.
- Process - Solutions for health
- Understandable for Government and other sectors - look for new solutions and build bridges across states
- Involve scientists and researchers and build bridges across states.

Conclusions:

- Next steps will be shared -
- Need to be clear and set priorities about the strategic direction we want to achieve - politically and strategically. How it should act to cement partnerships.
- Use window of opportunity wisely - this will be the challenge.
- Strategy not only of European institutions but of Europe -all voices are heard and can be reflected in the strategy.

Abstract: The French Presidency is strongly focusing on the revision of the European strategy on global health. The global geopolitical, economic, and environmental context has changed dramatically since its previous publication in 2010. We have faced numerous global challenges, including conflicts, financial crises, and the health emergencies of Ebola, SARS and COVID-19; whilst on the positive side the global community has successfully undertaken the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement.

It is essential that European Member States are unified in actively supporting global health governance and solidarity, bolstered by a renewed and comprehensive strategy relevant for the health of all the world's citizens. What common values and visions should a new global health strategy carry? What are the future strategic, geographic, and political priorities? What instruments and partnerships should underpin Europe's strategy for global health?

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