



During greatest public health crisis in living memory, European Commission adopts first Work Plan of new EU4Health Programme undermining key activities of European health NGOs

Luxembourg, 25 June 2021: Alzheimer Europe, the umbrella organisation of 37 national Alzheimer's associations from 33 European countries, has today supported **a call by European health NGOs** asking the European Commission to restore operating grants in the EU4Health Programme in order to support core activities of European NGOs, such as capacity building, training, networking and the exchange of good practices between national associations.

This call has been issued in response to the recent publication of the 2021-2022 EU4Health Annual Work Programme by the European Commission. Whilst Alzheimer Europe and other supporting associations welcome the ambitious budget of

EUR 312 million for crisis preparedness, disease prevention, health systems and the healthcare workforce and digitalisation, they regret that the operating grant mechanism for European health NGOs has been discontinued by a unilateral decision by the Commission, despite this mechanism having been explicitly included in the EU4Health Programme by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers during the legislative process leading to the adoption of the programme.

In **an open letter to Commissioner Kyriakides** on 2 June, 56 Members of the European Parliament recognised the crucial role of civil society organisations in supporting global health, acknowledging them as a "vital partner to both



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European and National institutions to shape and implement public health strategies and policies” and urgently called upon the European Commission “to revise its position on operating grants in the field of health”.

At the 2020 General Assembly of the European Public Health Alliance, Commissioner Kyriakides had herself underlined the value of European health NGOs: “I was President of an NGO myself so I know how important the input of civil society is to the legislative process. We count on civil society to understand the challenges and needs on the ground, and to deliver better health outcomes for all Europeans.”

Despite this political support, and despite the fact that operating grants continue in other policy fields of the European Commission, such as non-discrimination, disability, youth, ageing and the environment, the adopted Work Plan of the EU4Health programme abandons this key funding mechanism of support to health NGOs and risks seriously undermining the outstanding and pioneering work of European organisations in the field of public health.

Jean Georges, Executive Director of Alzheimer Europe,



highlighted: “At a time when the health programme has its most ambitious budget yet and when health NGOs are struggling with the impact of COVID-19, it seems inconceivable that the European Commission has chosen this moment to unilaterally discontinue the operating grant mechanism for European health NGOs. We hope that the Commission urgently revisits this position, as it endangers the very existence and sustainability of key European associations and their essential activities.”

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Notes to editors: Alzheimer Europe is the umbrella organisation of national Alzheimer associations and currently has 37 member organisations in 33 European countries. The mission statement of the organisation is to change perceptions, practice and policy to ensure equal access of people with dementia to a high level of care services and treatment options.

The support provided to Alzheimer Europe by the previous health programmes in the form of operating grants covered core activities and initiatives of the association such as the European Working Group of People with Dementia, the European Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia with health ministry officials from 31 European countries, the comparison of national dementia strategies and policies through its annual Yearbooks, the discussion and development of ethical issues and recommendations, the organisation of its Annual Conference bringing together between 750 and 1,000 participants and the development of its Alzheimer’s Association Academy with capacity building workshops for its national member organisations.