

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Thursday 2 February, 2017

EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCATES DEMAND GREATER PUBLIC RETURNS FROM EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, HORIZON 2020

AMSTERDAM—European public health advocates have called upon the European Commission to make substantial changes to how it funds research and development (R&D) projects for new medicines, to allow for greater public access to the innovations that it helps to fund.

“Europeans have a right to question why they are funding R&D projects without the European Commission taking simple steps to guarantee that citizens can benefit from discoveries that they helped to fund,” said Tessel Mellema from Health Action International, speaking on behalf of the eight civil society organisations who drafted a joint submission to the Commission.

The call comes following the Commission’s public consultation for the mid-term review of the European Union’s (EU) Research and Innovation programme, Horizon 2020 (H2020), which administers a funding pool of nearly €80 billion. It also echoes similar demands made on Tuesday by the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

“At a time when there is real concern within Member States over astronomical prices for new drugs treating cancer and hepatitis C, the European Commission has the opportunity to take real and practical steps to make new biomedical discoveries affordable and accessible across the European Union,” said Aliénor Devalière, one of the report’s authors from Médecins Sans Frontières - Access Campaign.

The joint submission to the Horizon 2020 consultation established six key recommendations that the European Commission should consider during their review process:

1. Invest more public funding in biomedical R&D
2. Improve public health needs-driven priority setting for biomedical R&D
3. Improve and mandate open access publishing and open data
4. Ensure public return on public investment and safeguard equitable access to publicly funded health technologies
5. Explore alternative incentive mechanisms for more efficient, high-quality R&D
6. Increase transparency of research consortium agreements

The submission authors also highlight that the EU has an obligation to ensure a high standard of human health protection across the Union, however major inequalities still exist in the quality of healthcare available in EU Member States.

The full submission to the European Commission consultation can be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/2jYEALy>.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The submission to the mid-term review of Horizon 2020 was co-authored by the following organisations:

Health Action International
Medicines Sans Frontieres - Access Campaign
Global Health Advocates
Commons Network
Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
Salud por Derecho
Knowledge Ecology International - Europe
BukoPharmaKampagne

It has also been endorsed by the following organisations:

AIDS Action Europe
Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos
Ärzte der Welt e.V. (Doctors of the World Germany)
All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS
European Public Health Alliance
WEMOS
Hepatitis Scotland
Dying for a Cure
Praxis
Test-Aankoop
BEUC
Just Treatment
Health Projects for Latvia
EKPIZA
Brot für die Welt
OCU - Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios

For comment, interview requests with the authors, or additional information:

James Still, Communications Advisor
Health Action International
Email: james@haiweb.org / Office: +31 20 412 4523