

Convergence on Global Health-

Joint action with reference to the new EU Global Health Strategy

In November 2022, the new Global Health Strategy was presented by the EU Commission. This strategy will be the backdrop for a seminar arranged by Karolinska Institutet in dialogue with the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. During the seminar on the 9th of February 2023 distinguished guests and experts will discuss the changing role of the EU as a global health actor with the aim to contribute to a European convergence on global health action the new EU Global Health Strategy as a basis.

Universities and NGOs provide a seedbed for sustainability

Having an open and constructive cross-sectoral dialogue between academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), policymakers, and other important stakeholders is decisive for action on the Global Health Strategy and ultimately the UN 2030 Agenda. The different roles of different sectors come with different responsibilities but also with different opportunities. While EU Council conclusions are currently being drafted by policymakers, based on the new Global Health strategy, universities and NGOs have important roles both as advocates and implementers of the strategy. Their engagement transcends through political terms of office and presidencies of the Council of the EU and forms a seedbed for sustainability. The third mission of universities entails that the responsibility of universities extends beyond teaching and research. Universities strive to ensure that the knowledge they generate is put to good use for the benefit of all. They have a long-term perspective and must promote sustainable development including a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare and justice for current and future generations. This challenge knows no national borders and universities are particularly well suited to contribute to this effort since they are global in nature, they cater not only to their respective nations, but to the world at large.

The February 9th seminar in Stockholm carries on the torch lit by universities and NGOs in Lyon during the French Presidency of the Council of the EU (The Lyon Declaration), through the World Health Summit in Berlin, on to Prague during the Czech Republic presidency and moving forward through the presidencies of Spain and Belgium. The Lyon Declaration is a living document that caters for sustainability and long-term commitment with the message that we need “One Europe for Global Health”. To safeguard health—planetary, animal and human, the Lyon Declaration calls for a long-term commitment for future generations, a global perspective, equity and solidarity, cross-sectoral cooperation, and improved governance.

Health transcends national borders

We knew it before, and the Covid-19 pandemic made it even more clear that health is intimately global, transcending national borders as well as those between humans and animals and the planet. No nation can deal with such health threat in isolation. It is however also clear, that health still largely remains a national mandate, including within EU. It is time to find ways to resolve this paradox together. Important steps have been taken by the EU and WHO on pandemic preparedness and now we have a new EU Global Health Strategy. At the same time EU member states have their own national global health strategies. Although the pandemic spurred great solidarity, it also revealed a lack of the same in several important ways. There is still a blatant technology divide that has precluded vaccine and medicine production in resource poor settings. This has exposed the lack of equitable and just distribution of the fruits of science. It is thus incumbent on universities to react when they see that the knowledge they generate is transferred and translated in a way that stands as inequitable and unjust. How should the EU safeguard human health in the decades to come, knowing

that it is inextricably intertwined with animal health and the health of our planet? Our health is increasingly impacted by changes in climate, loss of biodiversity, geopolitical turbulence, antimicrobial resistance and inequitable access to food and other resources. How should the EU take on this challenge knowing that health must be safeguarded and improved for *all*, across geographical and generational boundaries and socioeconomic strata? And how can universities and NGOs contribute to joint action?

Join us in Nobel Forum on the 9th of February to carry the torch through the presidencies of the Council of the EU, across sectors, governance levels, silos and sustainability domains to cater for inclusive action for the right to health for all.