Strengthening the EU health system

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening virtually on 11-12 June 2021:

Appreciates:

- the EU bodies and national states showing cohesion and taking initiatives to advance further towards a real union when combating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the EU reacting properly and enabling fast but safe research and approval processes during the crisis;
- the EU being the primary negotiation party carrying out the negotiations with vaccine producers and organising a central procurement for the whole Union.

Urges for quick implementation of the following initiatives already taken by the Commission and the European Parliament:

- an effective alarm mechanism for health crises such as pandemics, sanitary crises or drug shortages;
- a RescEU stockpile of medical equipment;
- rapid and safe approval procedures for critical pharmaceuticals;
- strengthen public health agencies, such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and ensure their functionality on weekends and during public holidays;
- the provision of recommendations for necessary lockdown, border traffic restrictions, green lanes for transport, and quarantine measures that are differentiated according to the regional impact;
- the development of EU standards as a recommendation for the treatment and prevention of situations that can become life-threatening;
- the attribution of competences, skills and expertise to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA);
- the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, which sets out a new and joint EU approach to cancer prevention, treatment and care.

Believes:

- in the positive effects of free, open and fair worldwide trade fostering global wealth;
- that protectionist reactions would be a wrong signal to the world and WTO, e.g. export restrictions or excessive subsidies for production of pharmaceutical ingredients and medical equipment in the EU;

- that as long as the supply of medicines and vaccines cannot be guaranteed, measures like cuts in bureaucracy, investment protection subsidies for production facilities or subsidies for security of supply may be imposed at EU-level.

Calls the EU bodies and its member states to:

- build a stockpile of medical goods managed by the ECDC and review reliance on medical goods from outside the European Union;
- ensure the diversification of sourcing for imports of medicines, vaccines and medical products essential to the health infrastructure of the EU;
- ensure that the upcoming decisions on the EU Health Technology Assessment regulation respect the principle of subsidiarity. Member states should be obliged to consider clinical Health Technology Assessments on EU level, but have to remain entitled to deviate from clinical assessments when deciding on reimbursement by national Social Security systems;
- to grant each other unlimited support in times of health emergencies by taking care of patients who cannot get hospital treatment in their respective home country and the EU to enforce this solidarity among the Member States if necessary;
- develop a genomic strategy that aims at connecting national data base projects to improve access to knowledge e.g. on rare diseases;
- cut back bureaucracy and create an entrepreneur and innovation friendly environment to attract the necessary industries, e.g. in the field of genetics;
- invest in basic academic research in areas where the market does not sufficiently supply the needs of the population, e.g. vaccination or antibiotics. The knowledge created by academic research can reduce production costs, which makes it more profitable for private corporations to develop a product;
- address the risk of a digital divide as we are moving towards more eHealth options and therefore calls for putting in place policies and funding that support high digital connectivity especially in rural areas;
- stick to high EU standards with regard to the environment, health and safety of the workforce and production process requirements;
- develop the necessary legislation to allow the European Commission with subsequent approval of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU to mandate proportional and uniform travel restrictions (e. g. mandatory health checks, quarantine or travel bans) for travel into the EU and Schengen Area in order to stop the spread of infectious diseases with pandemic potential at an early stage like Taiwan did during the Covid-19 pandemic;

- monitor and ensure that the Digital Green Certificate is not used for other purposes than it was created (vaccination) or in breach of fundamental freedoms and privacy rights.