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Agreement reached on new EU health programme

The Permanent Representatives Committee¹ today approved a compromise agreed with the European Parliament on a draft regulation establishing the EU health programme for the years 2014-2020. It herewith endorsed a compromise reached between the Lithuanian presidency and representatives of the European Parliament and the Commission on 6 November.

The new EU health programme is aimed at encouraging innovation in healthcare, increasing the sustainability of health systems, improving the health of EU citizens and protecting them from cross-border health threats. The programme will have up to EUR 449.4 million (in current prices) at its disposal.

The new EU health programme builds on the two previous programmes covering the periods 2003-2008 and 2008-2013. Compared to the former programmes the new one concentrates support on a smaller number of activities in priority areas, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. More precisely, it seeks to complement member states' health policies in the following four areas:

1. **promotion of good health and prevention of diseases**; eligible actions include for instance the exchange of good practices for addressing risk factors such as smoking, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy dietary habits and physical inactivity.
2. **protection from cross-border health threats** which might be improved via an increase of the capacities for scientific expertise.

¹ The Permanent Representatives Committee is composed of the ambassadors of the 28 EU member states. Its role is to prepare decisions of the Council.

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3. **innovative and sustainable health systems**; in this area, the new EU health programme could provide support of the voluntary cooperation between member states on health technology assessment (HTA), an EU-wide network of member states' to share information on the effectiveness of health technologies which was established by the directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.
4. **increased access to better and safer healthcare**; eligible actions include support for member states and patient organisations to help patients affected by rare diseases and the reduction of practices that increase antimicrobial resistance.

As a general rule, the EU will cover 60% of the costs for an action under the programme. The EU co-financing rate may, however, rise to 80% if, for instance, at least 30% of the budget for an action is allocated to member states whose gross national income is less than 90% of the EU average.

The programme will be open to third countries, in particular acceding countries, countries belonging to the European Free Trade Association and the European Economic Area, neighbouring countries and other countries as long as this has been agreed within a bilateral or multilateral agreement.

In order to enter into force the draft regulation still needs to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council.
