

Open Letter to the European Parliament's Committee on  
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

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Dear Chair, dear Co-Chairs, dear Members, dear Substitute Members,

On 12 and 13 October 2020 the European Parliament is addressing what requirements and conditions must be fulfilled to at all cost prevent, and if that fails, to be prepared for a next pandemic. In the past months, consultations with industry sectors and risk managers have made clear that hardly any industry sector can survive another pandemic. Worse, all alarm bells will go off if Covid-19.2 is combined with an outbreak of multiple- or totally-resistant bacteria as referred to in last week's key important letter of 30 Members of the European Parliament ([6 October 2020](#)). Despite dire warnings of then Director General of the WHO Margaret Chan ([14 March 2012](#)) that a post-antibiotic era is rapidly dawning, the European Court of Auditors in their report of [15 November 2019](#) notes that the European Commission has spent over 1 billion Euro without much consequence. In a recent [presentation](#) to various industrial sectors, it is argued that only a Heads of State and Government-level Council or Committee, advised by an advisory council of scientific experts and civic representatives, can avoid any repetition of past mistakes. This Committee can be based on the 2013 European Health Security Committee. This is now advisory and bureaucratic. If upgraded to the highest political level it will both be top-effective and an appropriate stepping stone to the European Health Union referred to by European Commission President Ms Ursula von der Leyen.

Under political guidance by Heads of State and Government and with scientific and civic society advice any potential pandemic can be monitored so that required preventive and preparedness action, if prevention fails, can immediately be taken. This Committee thus requires its own substantial budget. The initial proposal by the Commission to commit 9.4 bn euro for among others such purposes is correctly ambitious and deserves support. However, while an overview of all other proposals to address pandemics delivers several helpful elements, none include a total and undisturbed focus on threat and remedy. And none address the 'market failure' that prevents the production of new antibiotics. Since the warning in [1999](#) (!) of the Scientific Steering Committee of the European Commission to halt overproduction, overdistribution and overuse of antibiotics for animal growth and disease prevention and to stop unrequired use in human health, production and use of antibiotics continued unabated. This also led to such low prices that none of the pharmaceutical industries can profitably produce new antibiotics. Research and development must thus be combined in non-profit organisations such as Lygature, already funded by the European Commission and industry with 196 million euro. For 650 million euro, Lygature can potentially bring 80 new medicines to market in 10 years (see the [ELF funding model](#)).

Following their production, new antibiotics cannot be sold indiscriminately for a return on investment as this would once again lead to overuse and resistance. It is thus required to

include new antibiotics in the existing national strategic (wartime) reserves. If all EU Member States do this in a coordinated manner, the EU builds up a strategic reserve of effective antimicrobials for the entire world.

Last but not least, the lack of practical action to secure Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) production in Europe – creating an unacceptable level of strategic dependence – started with intense lobbying around Reg. 726 in 2004. At that time in an [exchange of letters](#) the European Commission disregarded explicit warnings regarding dire consequences of the import into the EU of cheap APIs that disrespect environment, human health and human rights in (Asian) production areas. The consequence was an exodus of European API producers. In other words, maybe only an initial non-profit approach, led by a new Heads of State and Government Committee, can lead Europe away from a next pandemic crisis. This may avoid that an unacceptable price will be paid in loss of life and trillions of euros if the current, untransparent and ineffective structures continue to be used.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration to do what all think should be done – but which few dare to address.

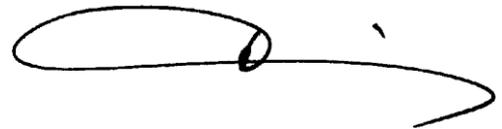
Yours sincerely,



Prof. Mark Eyskens  
Chairman  
Former Prime Minister of  
Belgium



RNDr. Pavel Poc  
Vice Chairman  
Former Member of the  
European Parliament, former  
Vice-Chair of ENVI



Rio Praaning Prawira Adiningrat  
Secretary General