

The 5th Edition of the **European Health Summit**, held on 3 and 4 December 2024 at the historic Egmont Palace in Brussels, brought together stakeholders from healthcare, industry, policymaking, patient organisations, academia, and civil society. This high-level platform, organised alongside the EPSCO Council, serves as a critical space for discussing key healthcare issues and sharing insights and best practices in healthcare policy across Europe and beyond.

Under the theme "**Gold Medal Mindset: Competitiveness and Sustainability in the Tech Age**," the Summit addressed vital topics, including Europe's healthcare industrial framework, the need for long-term, sustainable, and resilient systems, and the role of digital health. The event took place at a pivotal political moment, following the European elections, offering an opportunity to shape the healthcare agenda for the new mandate and put forward political priorities aimed at ensuring a healthier, more autonomous future for Europe.

Over 95 experts participated in 15 panel discussions, 4 interactive interviews, and 3 keynote addresses, exploring challenges such as the affordability and accessibility of innovative therapies, the interconnectedness of climate and health, and strategies to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Emphasis was placed on fostering innovation, ensuring equitable access to quality care, and adopting a holistic approach to mental health, all in support of a resilient and sustainable European Health Union.

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH JONATHAN SYMONDS, CHAIR OF THE BOARD, GSK

Jonathan Symonds highlighted the economic challenges of Europe's aging population and the need for prevention-focused healthcare systems. He stressed the importance of proactive interventions and early identification of at-risk groups to reduce healthcare costs.

Symonds also emphasized the role of technology and AI in improving healthcare delivery, advocating for strong public-private partnerships and investment in high-quality data. He addressed the ethical aspects of innovation, promoting equity, transparency, and trust.

Symonds concluded with a call for a 'gold medal mindset,' focusing on excellence, resilience, and patient-centered approaches to ensure a sustainable healthcare future.

HEALTH IS WEALTH: NAVIGATING THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ECONOMY AND WELL-BEING

This panel explored the critical connection between health and economic stability, emphasising the need for integrated healthcare reforms that foster both resilience and sustainability.

Discussions highlighted how improving health outcomes through investments in healthcare infrastructure, preventive measures, and equitable access can drive long-term economic growth and enhance competitiveness. Key topics included workforce absenteeism, particularly post-COVID-19, and the importance of health literacy, gender equity, and preventive strategies in building societal resilience. Panellists also addressed the economic impact of chronic disease risk factors like tobacco, alcohol, and fossil fuels, stressing that addressing these issues can reduce economic burdens while improving public health.

The session underscored the importance of adopting holistic, cross-sectoral policies that prioritise health as a fundamental driver of sustainable economic development.

INNOVATE, COMPETE, THRIVE: EUROPE'S PATH TO STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE AUTONOMY

Panelists discussed Europe's ambition to lead in pharmaceuticals and life sciences, positioning healthcare as a strategic investment rather than a cost. They highlighted the importance of robust intellectual property protections, predictable regulatory frameworks, and the full integration of digital health tools to support innovation.

Emphasis was placed on enhancing Europe's competitiveness by fostering collaboration across public and private sectors, strengthening venture capital investments, and developing future-proof healthcare systems.

The session underscored the urgent need for a forward-looking industrial framework to ensure the EU's strategic autonomy, boost the global competitiveness of the pharmaceutical sector, and improve patient outcomes, thereby reinforcing Europe's global standing through unified strategies that balance innovation with sustainability.

SHAPING RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS: PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE FINANCE IN EUROPE

This session focused on ensuring the financial sustainability of European health systems amidst challenges such as an ageing population, rising chronic diseases, staff shortages, and climate change. Panelists advocated for a comprehensive health funding strategy in the next budget cycle to sustain essential services and drive innovation and economic growth.

They emphasised the need for preventive measures, digital innovation, and cross-border collaboration to build resilient health systems. The importance of addressing health inequities and ensuring access to high-quality care for marginalised communities was also discussed.

The session highlighted how unified approaches to healthcare reform can enhance efficiency and sustainability, securing the economic and social foundations for the future.

REIMAGINING HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF SELF-CARE IN PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

Panelists emphasised self-care as a transformative approach to health management, capable of reducing the burden on healthcare systems and empowering individuals.

They highlighted the need for accessible health information and health literacy education, stressing the roles of schools, pharmacies, and digital platforms in promoting proactive health management. The session explored how integrating self-care, including the use of non-prescription medicines, into broader healthcare strategies could alleviate pressure on providers, reduce costs, and improve accessibility and affordability.

Technology and unified digital health platforms were identified as key enablers, with self-care positioned as a cornerstone of sustainable, modern healthcare that can enhance quality of life, increase productivity, and achieve significant cost savings.

INNOVATING FOR ALL: ENSURING EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE ACCESS IN THE EU

This session addressed the barriers to equitable healthcare access, including treatment availability, affordability, and regulatory delays. Panelists stressed the importance of streamlining regulations to foster innovation and enhance the efficiency of clinical trials, particularly through the use of AI, to speed up the development of therapies.

They also highlighted the need for robust public-private partnerships and increased investments in research and infrastructure to address disparities across Member States.

Emphasis was placed on ensuring that all citizens, regardless of location or economic status, benefit from healthcare advancements, with a focus on creating optimal conditions for competitiveness and a regulatory system that can adapt to the fast pace of innovation.

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH EMER COOKE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE EMA

Emer Cooke outlined the EMA's vision for harnessing digital solutions and AI to transform healthcare. Key themes included promoting interoperability across healthcare systems, addressing ethical considerations in AI applications, and utilising real-world evidence to accelerate the approval of advanced therapies.

Cooke emphasised the need to balance regulation with innovation to improve healthcare outcomes, streamline processes, and build trust among stakeholders. She also envisioned a fully digitalised regulatory framework that enhances efficiency while upholding high standards of safety and transparency.

UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN BIOTECH: FROM INCEPTION TO GLOBAL CHAMPIONS

This session explored the transformative potential of biotechnology to revolutionise healthcare, drive economic growth, and create jobs. Discussions focused on empowering biotech startups, particularly those tackling critical challenges like vaccine development and advanced therapies, through tailored support mechanisms such as venture debt models, public-private partnerships, and mentoring programmes.

Panelists highlighted the EU Biotech Act as a crucial initiative aimed at harmonising regulations, reducing administrative burdens, and incentivising innovation across the sector. The session emphasised the need for a cohesive

European biotech ecosystem that fosters collaboration among industry leaders, researchers, and policymakers, enabling Europe to strengthen its global position in life sciences and drive transformative advancements in healthcare.

BEYOND THE INVISIBLE: BUILDING EUROPE'S MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCE

The panel emphasised the need for a paradigm shift from a predominantly biomedical model to more holistic psychosocial approaches in mental health care.

Discussions highlighted the rising impact of social media on youth mental health, with issues such as cyberbullying, excessive screen time, and social isolation contributing significantly to depression. Systemic challenges faced by healthcare providers, including resource constraints, burnout, and a lack of specialised training, were also examined. Panelists called for increased funding, policy reforms, and cross-sectoral collaboration to effectively address these barriers.

Education and public awareness campaigns were recognised as essential in fostering resilience and building a more inclusive mental health system, one that is capable of meeting the diverse needs of European populations.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION

Ministers of Health and EU leaders discussed the critical role of cross-border cooperation in addressing shared health challenges, such as infectious diseases, cancer, and cardiovascular conditions.

The session highlighted the importance of innovative strategies, including the use of advanced data analytics and digital health tools, to improve early detection, treatment, and resource allocation. Panelists emphasised the need to balance national priorities with collective EU goals to build a resilient, equitable healthcare system capable of adapting to emerging threats while ensuring long-term sustainability.

Greater alignment of policies and collaborative approaches were identified as essential to achieving a unified and efficient European health landscape, reinforcing the EU's commitment to equitable access and strengthened health systems.

CLOSING REMARKS BY DAME SALLY DAVIES, UK SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AMR

The first day of the European Health Summit 2024 concluded with a keynote speech by Dame Sally Davies, UK Special Envoy for AMR, emphasising the urgent need for global collaboration to address antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Projected to cause millions of deaths by 2050, AMR threatens to undermine decades of progress in healthcare. Dame Sally highlighted the social justice dimensions of the crisis, stressing its disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where limited diagnostics worsen outcomes.

She reaffirmed the UK's commitment to international leadership, including funding a global scientific panel, and called for unified action to strengthen health systems and protect future generations.

OPENING REMARKS BY ARIS ANGELIS, SECRETARY GENERAL, MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF GREECE

The European Health Summit 2024 opened with a keynote speech by Aris Angelis, Secretary General at Greece's Ministry of Health, highlighting the need for innovation and collaboration to strengthen Europe's healthcare systems.

Using the Draghi Report as a framework, the address focused on key priorities: prevention through proactive public health measures, improving access to modern therapies, and enhancing resilience against crises such as pandemics and climate-related emergencies.

The speech set an ambitious tone, emphasising Greece's leadership in aligning national efforts with Europe's vision for a healthier, more unified, and resilient future.

FROM CONCLUSIONS TO ACTION: WHY EUROPE NEEDS A COMPREHENSIVE EU ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE GROWING BURDEN OF CARDIO, RENAL, AND METABOLIC DISEASES

Panelists called for a comprehensive EU action plan to address the growing burden of cardio, renal, and metabolic (CRM) diseases, which account for 80% of deaths in Europe and represent a significant economic and social challenge.

Discussions highlighted the need for early diagnosis, prevention strategies, and integrated care models to reduce complications and healthcare costs. Panelists emphasised the interconnected nature of these conditions, with a shift towards a more holistic approach to NCD prevention being crucial.

The importance of public education, lifestyle interventions, and community engagement in promoting healthier habits and reducing disease prevalence was stressed. Cross-sector collaboration was identified as vital to creating a sustainable and efficient healthcare system capable of effectively tackling the rising burden of CRM diseases.

A WAKE-UP CALL: TACKLING HIDDEN FACTORS IN NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

This session highlighted the often-overlooked role of sleep health in addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Panelists discussed the significant economic costs and health risks associated with sleep disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnoea and chronic insomnia, which are closely linked to cardiovascular and mental health issues. The session emphasised the need to integrate sleep health into public health policies and raise awareness of its impact on overall well-being. Innovative solutions, including wearable technologies and AI-driven diagnostics, were identified as transformative tools to improve sleep health and reduce the prevalence of NCDs.

Panelists called for coordinated efforts to prioritise sleep alongside other public health initiatives, such as diet and exercise, to foster a healthier and more resilient society.

SECURING MEDICINES SUPPLY CHAINS FOR ALL

Panelists examined the vulnerabilities in Europe's medicine supply chains and discussed strategies to ensure resilience and reliability. Key recommendations included fostering robust public-private partnerships, increasing investments in domestic manufacturing, and streamlining regulatory frameworks to reduce delays and improve efficiency.

The human impact of supply chain disruptions, particularly for patients with chronic or life-threatening conditions, was emphasised. The session also highlighted the importance of Europe's focus on strategic autonomy to secure both innovative and generic medicines. Collaborative reforms and enhanced coordination among EU member states were identified as critical to building a future-proof system that ensures equitable access to essential medicines for all citizens.

The role of the newly created EU Critical Medicines Alliance was noted as crucial in developing solutions and fostering international collaboration to secure supply chains.

EUROPE'S CRITICAL NEED FOR A DIGITAL HEALTHCARE STRATEGY

Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl, Director-General at DIGITALEUROPE, highlighted the need for a unified European digital healthcare strategy to harness technologies like AI, digital twins, and telehealth.

While progress has been made with the European Health Data Space Regulation, she emphasised the importance of cybersecurity, ethical data use, and a flexible regulatory framework to foster innovation and build trust.

The session called for coordinated efforts to position Europe as a global leader in digital healthcare, ensuring equitable access and maximising the potential of advanced technologies.

FROM LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENTATION: PIONEERING THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL HEALTHCARE IN

The European Health Summit examined the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and its potential to transform healthcare across the EU by improving patient health, enhancing system resilience, and driving innovation.

The regulation aims to strengthen collaboration, data protection, and accessibility, positioning Europe as a global leader in life sciences. However, its successful implementation requires overcoming challenges such as governance disparities, technical capabilities, and alignment of national laws with EU regulations.

Discussions emphasised the need for a unified approach to prevent fragmentation, with digital healthcare solutions like telemedicine and telepharmacy identified as key to improving access in underserved areas. The session concluded with a vision of empowering patients to control their health data, driving research, and creating a more connected, resilient healthcare system across Europe.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN TECH AND LIFE SCIENCE

The fireside chat explored the transformative potential of quantum computing and AI in healthcare and life sciences, with a focus on Europe's role in driving innovation.

Roberto Viola and Lene Oddershede highlighted Europe's leadership in quantum technology and the importance of leveraging research to develop practical, impactful solutions. They discussed the potential of these technologies to accelerate drug discovery, enhance diagnostics, and address critical health challenges.

The conversation emphasised the need for sustained investment, strategic collaboration, and securing Europe's technological autonomy to ensure these advancements benefit the health sector and contribute to global competitiveness.

EXPLORING QUANTUM AND AI STRATEGIES IN EUROPEAN HEALTHCARE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The session focused on the transformative potential of quantum computing and AI in European healthcare, highlighting their ability to revolutionise drug development, genomics, and life sciences. Experts discussed the need to bridge the gap between research and practical applications, stressing the importance of infrastructure, data governance, and a skilled workforce for successful integration. The urgency of implementing these technologies to drive innovation and improve patient outcomes was emphasised, alongside the ethical considerations of their use. The EU's support through initiatives like the flagship quantum programme was highlighted as crucial for fostering collaboration and advancing healthcare solutions.

MEDTECH IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

This session explored how the MedTech sector can balance innovation with sustainability amid the EU's focus on the green transition.

Panelists highlighted the challenges posed by stringent environmental regulations and slower timelines in medical device legislation but emphasised the opportunities digitalisation brings for eco-design, product durability, and energy efficiency.

Discussions stressed the importance of regulatory alignment, circular economy practices, and collaboration with healthcare providers to reduce environmental impact while advancing healthcare access and outcomes.

The session positioned MedTech as a leader in sustainable innovation, driving environmental responsibility and resilience in a competitive global market.

BEYOND BORDERS: COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO COMBAT CLIMATE-RELATED HEALTH THREATS

This session examined the growing health threats posed by climate change, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and air pollution, emphasising their profound impact on global public health and the sustainability of healthcare systems.

Panelists highlighted the health risks linked to rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and the increasing prevalence of zoonoses, vector-borne diseases, and AMR.

Discussions underscored the urgent need for adaptation and mitigation strategies, including decarbonisation, resilient health infrastructure, and cross-border collaboration. Special focus was given to promoting equity, with solutions aimed at protecting vulnerable populations and strengthening healthcare systems to address both immediate and long-term challenges.

THE EU'S GLOBAL CALL: FIGHTING AMR FOR A RESILIENT TOMORROW

This session explored the urgent global challenge of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), emphasising its threat to health systems, economic stability, and global resilience.

Panelists called for a comprehensive "One Health" approach to tackle AMR across human, animal, and environmental health. Key discussions focused on enhancing antimicrobial development pipelines, strengthening stewardship, and expanding access to diagnostics and treatments, particularly in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.

Public-private partnerships were highlighted as pivotal to driving innovation, while responsible antibiotic use and public awareness were identified as essential to mitigating resistance. The session stressed the EU's opportunity to lead ambitious action on AMR, reinforcing global health resilience and strategic autonomy.

CLOSING REMARKS BY OLIVÉR VÁRHELYI, EU COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH AND ANIMAL WELFARE

In his High-Level Closing Keynote at EHS 2024, EU Commissioner for Health Olivér Várhelyi addressed Europe's major health challenges, including medicine shortages, emerging health threats, and the need for a modernised healthcare ecosystem.

He emphasised the importance of reforming pharmaceutical legislation to improve patient access, streamline processes, and reduce costs, while fostering a dynamic innovation landscape.

Várhelyi proposed a new Biotech Act to spur innovation and suggested simplifying medical device regulations. He also focused on preventive health measures, Europe's commitment to tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and the creation of a Critical Medicines Act to ensure access to essential medications. Highlighting the role of AI and the European Health Data Space, he stressed their potential to accelerate access to life-saving products while ensuring safety.

Várhelyi called for Europe to lead the fight against AMR, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases, advocating for greater innovation and biotech breakthroughs. He concluded by reinforcing the idea that investing in health is not a cost, but a long-term investment in both healthier populations and economic growth, positioning Europe as a global leader in healthcare innovation and sustainability.

CONCLUDING REMARKS BY ARNAUD TYSEN, DIRECTOR GENERAL, EUROPEAN BUSINESS SUMMITS

At the close of the 5th European Health Summit, Arnaud Thyssen highlighted the shared responsibility to shape Europe's healthcare future under the theme "Gold Medal Mindset: Competitiveness and Sustainability in the Tech Age." Key discussions included enhancing competitiveness, leveraging innovation with ethical considerations, fostering collaboration, and addressing societal challenges.

He announced a new platform on 'healthy longevity' and demographic shifts, supported by Professor Peter Piot, to be featured at next year's 25th-anniversary European Business Summit. Mr. Thyssen thanked Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians and Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi for their contributions and encouraged continued efforts toward a healthier future.

QUESTIONS OR REMARKS? CONTACT US!

CONTACT

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