



HOUSE OF LORDS
European Union Committee

House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Tel: 020 7219 4579
Fax: 020 7219 6715
euclords@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk/lords

16 July 2020

Ed Argar MP
Minister of State for Health
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Dear Ed,

COM(2020) 405 final: REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the establishment of a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health –for the period 2021-2027 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 282/2014 (“EU4Health Programme”)

Thank you for your Explanatory Memorandum (EM) on the above proposal, which was considered by our Environment Sub-Committee on 15 July 2020.

We note your decision not to participate in the proposed EU4Health programme. We believe that continued collaboration in this field is critical, and have particular concerns regarding a loss of cooperation on clinical trials, a smaller population pool for health research on matters such as vaccines, and reduced leverage in procurement exercises for medical equipment such as PPE. Whether in relation to this proposal or more generally, we urge you to consider the benefits of working with the EU to improve health outcomes in the UK and more widely.

It seems that a number of the actions outlined in the proposal would be beneficial to the UK in dealing with serious cross-border health threats. You also acknowledge in your EM that you are seeking to address some of the same issues as those covered in the proposals in the Future Relationship negotiations. It is therefore unclear why you are not intending to do so through the available provisions. Your EM does not provide an adequate explanation of why this decision was made, so please provide details on the reasoning behind your decision.

We also note that your decision was initially made on the basis of the current health programme. Its successor is much larger and has a more significant cross-border focus than could have been anticipated when making that original decision. Please clarify to what extent your decision was reassessed in light of the publication of these EU4Health proposals.

You note that some health researchers and organisations may be affected by this decision. What is the current scale of the UK's participation in EU health programmes – i.e. how many individuals and organisations participate, and how much investment is provided through EU programmes? Which particular researchers, organisations and work areas do you believe may be affected, and will you be providing them with any support? And did you consult those individuals and organisations as part of reaching your decision not to participate in the EU4Health programme? If so, what was their response?

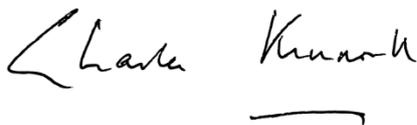
You state that you will not be establishing a domestic equivalent of the EU4Health programme because there is domestic funding available from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In light of the significantly increased budget for the next EU health programme, please clarify whether you intend to increase the scale of future investment channelled through those organisations to a similar degree to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of this field, and what scale of funding will be available overall in this area.

You noted in your EM that the devolved administrations had been consulted in preparing the EM, and that although the matter itself is reserved, they have an interest relating to their responsibilities. Did the devolved administrations support your decision not to participate in EU4Health?

We are particularly interested in the views of the Northern Ireland Assembly, in light of the elements of the programme that refer to structural healthcare system reforms. As you will be aware, a number of health services and facilities are shared between Northern Ireland and Ireland, such as the Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry/Londonderry: what assessment have you made of the impact of your decision on those services?

The Committee continues to take an active interest in this matter and we look forward to a response in 10 working days.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Jessica Mulley, Clerk to the Commons Committee; Les Saunders, Cabinet Office; and Rebecca Diment, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Kinnoull', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee