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Lord Kinoull
Chair
European Union Committee
House of Lords
London
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24th September 2020

Dear Lord Kinoull,

COM (2020) 405: Proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health –for the period 2021-2027 ("EU4Health Programme") (41321)

Thank you for your response regarding the Explanatory Memorandum (EM) of 19 June 2020 on the above proposal and for the pertinent questions outlined in your letter.

In the EM I submitted to the Committee I set out that, based on the information then available, the UK would not consider participation in the successor Health Programme for 2021-27 (EU4Health Programme). The UK's initial decision not to pursue participation in the EU4Health Programme was based on careful consideration of the benefits of participation to the UK and the EU in the EU's Third Health Programme and on the expectation that the EU4Health Programme would be similar in scale and scope to its predecessor. Ministers considered carefully which Union programmes to consider participation in going forwards and, as set out in the UK's Approach to Negotiations published in February, the UK is considering participation in a number of programmes where it is in the UK's and the EU's interest that we do so.

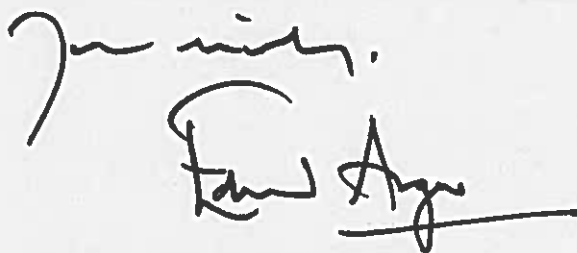
Clearly the context for the next Health Programme has significantly changed and the Commission's proposals are unprecedented. At the time of the publication of the proposal, the size of the EU4Health Programme budget had not been agreed. Subsequently, at the special meeting of the European Council held on 17-21 July 2020, the EU's long-term budget (the Multiannual Financial Framework) was agreed for the period of 2021-27. It was agreed that the EU4Health Programme would receive €1.67 Billion of EU funding. This figure is significantly less than the €9.4 billion budget featured in the recent proposal for the Programme and therefore I expect that proposal will now need to be significantly altered. Despite the announcement of the budget of the EU4Health Programme, there has been no further detail on the breakdown of spending within the Programme nor has there been any decision on funding mechanisms used to calculate UK contributions. My officials

have carried out initial analysis of the proposal since receiving your response to the Explanatory Memorandum, but it has not been possible to draw any conclusions as significant changes to the proposal are expected.

It also remains the case that these changes, in both form and content, will occur through the EU legislative process or via Member State consultations that the UK will not be part of, under the terms agreed in the Withdrawal Agreement, thus the UK will be unable to influence the direction of the Programme.

On this basis, the UK Government will need to await the publication of a revised proposal for the EU4Health Programme, based on the revised budget announced in July, before reviewing and updating the Committee accordingly, including answering, in more detail, the questions outlined in your letter once we have the necessary level of information on the new proposal.

I would also like to reassure you that in drafting the EM, my officials consulted with their counterparts in all three of the Devolved Administrations. This included the Northern Irish Government, who had no comments on the Proposal or EM.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

EDWARD ARGAR MP