



Department
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Lord Kinnoull
Chair
European Union Committee
House of Lords
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4th November 2020

Dear Lord Kinnoull,

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 letter of 28 October regarding the Explanatory Memorandum (EM) of 19 June 2020 on the above proposal and for the further questions outlined in your letter. I have sought to answer these below.

You asked if the revised scale of the EU4Health proposal, and the breakdown of spending within it, affected the Government decision not to seek participation as a third country?

Despite the announcement of the budget for the EU4Health programme at the European Council meeting held on 17-21 July, 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. As I mentioned in my previous letter, my officials have carried out an initial analysis of the proposal since the original EM but it has not been possible to draw any conclusions as significant changes to the proposal are expected. With this in my mind, there has not been enough information on the shape of the new programme for the Government to review its decision on participation at this time.

You asked for clarification on whether the Government intends to adjust the scale or focus of future investment channelled through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in light of the EU4Health proposals.

The Government is determined to continue to support our world-leading research sector. After the end of transition period, health researchers will continue to be able to access domestic funding available and sources include, for example, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The Government invests around £1.8 billion per year in health research funding through the NIHR and the MRC alone.

You asked for the reasoning behind the Government's decision not seek participation in the EU4Health Programme when we are seeking to address some of the same issues as those covered in the Programme's proposals through the Future Relationship negotiations.

As I set out in my initial EM, the Government said in our "Approach to the Future Relationship Negotiations with the EU" that we would consider standard third country participation in certain Union programmes where it is in the UK's and EU's interest that we do so. We also set out that any agreements relating to Union programmes should contain fair terms for UK participation including fair treatment of participants, a fair and appropriate financial contribution, provisions allowing for sound financial management by both parties, and appropriate governance and consultation. In light of this, careful consideration was given by Ministers to the benefits of participation in the EU's future Health Programme to the UK and EU. On this basis, DHSC Ministers decided not to pursue future participation in the EU Health Programme. This decision was endorsed by the XO Cabinet Committee.

Since this decision was taken, the EU's proposal for the successor Health Programme was published, including actions in areas that fall under UK competence, such as health infrastructure and implementing health system reform. Participating in a programme where the EU is seeking to significantly strengthen its influence in these areas is not in line with our overarching ambitions for the Future Relationship. Although it remains the case that, in light of the significantly smaller budget announcement in July, the proposal for the programme will now need to be significantly altered, we hold no information on what these changes will look like. We will also not be able to influence the direction of the Programme and will not be involved in the decision-making process for changes in both form and content as these will occur through the EU legislative process or via Member State consultations. As such, at this stage, we have no basis on which to re-evaluate the decision on participation in the future EU Health Programme and the Government will pursue its health policy objectives outside of the Programme and through Future Relationship negotiations where appropriate.

You asked for the current scale of the UK's participation in the EU Health Programme, including how many organisations participate and how much investment is provided through EU Programmes and whether these organisations were consulted as part of decision-making on participation in the EU4Health Programme.

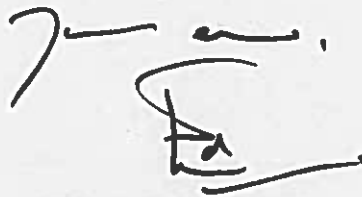
The most recent data we hold shows that UK participants received £2.7 million of EU funding through the Health Programme in 2018. This funding was received by 19 UK participating organisations. These organisations were not consulted during the decision-making process on whether to participate in the EU4Health programme as this is a separate programme to the current programme and the participating organisations would differ depending on the form and scope of the programme.

Finally, you asked what assessment the Government have made of the impact of the decision not to participate in the EU4Health Programme on the health services and

facilities that are shared between Northern Ireland and Ireland, such as the Altnagelvin Hospital Derry/Londonderry.

No assessment has been carried out on the impact on not participating in the EU4Health Programme on individual health services and facilities. I can assure you, however, that my officials have consulted with their counterparts in the Devolved Administrations, including Northern Ireland, on the issue of non-participation in the EU4Health programme and no concerns over health services and facilities that are shared between Northern Ireland and Ireland, such as the Altnagelvin Hospital, have been raised.

As noted in previous correspondence, in the event of the publication of a revised proposal for the EU4Health Programme, based on the revised budget announced in July, the Government will update the Committee accordingly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Argar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Argar MP