

Feedback from:

EuroHealthNet

Feedback reference

F13655

Submitted on

6 August 2018

Submitted by

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User type

Other

Organisation

EuroHealthNet

Organisation size

Small (10 to 49 employees)

Transparency register number

[48562122691-12](#)

Country of origin

Belgium

Initiative

[Multiannual Financial Framework: Internal Market, Competitiveness of SMEs and European Statistics Programme](#)

EuroHealthNet welcomes the proposal for the new EU Single Market Programme, aimed to enhance cohesion, competitiveness, productivity, and growth by strengthening the governance of the internal market, consumer rights protection and empowerment, while promoting human, animal and plant health. A well-functioning EU internal market, guided by principles of good governance and commitment to social equity, can advance rights, enable health and well-being of EU consumers. Wellbeing and cohesion are EU Treaty objectives, and EU citizens value their health as a priority. Therefore, it is essential to ensure EU internal market policies put population health on equal bases with economic and competitiveness considerations. The EU's market focus on growth and jobs within

the EU must aspire to inclusively benefit all EU citizens. Freedom of movement of goods (incl. medicines, medical devices, foods), people (incl. health workforce) and services has already benefited many, but also excluded others. With its specific focus on food, the new Programme can help improve access to and availability of high quality and sustainably produced food for consumers – ultimately advancing people’s health and well-being across a social gradient and life course.

EuroHealthNet believes that the EU Single Market Programme can reap the benefits of strong consumer protection, and an inclusive and health-promoting sustainable food production and consumption system. This success rests on important aspects that must be considered:

► Improving food systems’ sustainability and keeping up high standards on food safety: The EU Consumer Programme has been successful in protecting the rights and health of European consumers, the environment, and making enforcements effective, efficient, and equitable according to programme evaluations. Maintaining high food safety standards can also improve the nutritional quality of the entire food supply chain, reduce contamination and control practices around supplementary foods for older infants and young children to ensure the health and nutrition of vulnerable population groups. The Programme can contribute to promotion of sustainable food production practices and consumption of health-promoting products.

► Empowerment of systems-embedded healthy choices: The proposal includes educational initiatives to make consumers aware of their rights and benefits of the EU Single Market. However, in order to promote healthy dietary practices as the easiest ones and address the increasing public health problem of diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD), choices should be facilitated by extended coherence with wider systems arrangements, including health-harming product regulations and duties (alcohol, HFSS foods).

► Improving health cooperation in the EU and tackle inequality: The tool supports EU and its MS collaboration in areas related to determinants of health subject to EU internal market forces – goods, services and people. While recognising that better competition and choice has potential to improve health of individuals, its ‘unintended’ impact on aggravating health inequalities at population level should be considered. Currently, the EU internal market arrangements insufficiently address inequalities dimension in and among EU MS. The Programme’s boost for increasing digital transformation of the EU Single Market must also be inequality-proofed. Considering the substantial digital divide across the EU, digitalisation of public health services and initiatives – by means of e-health/m-health solutions - should be balanced with improved quality and access to ‘traditional’ preventative health services to be truly innovative and cost-effective.

► high-quality European statistics: The proposal calls for improved data reporting, including regional and local information, to encourage and strengthen quality evidence-based decision-making, which should be disaggregated with socio-economic indicators and equity-responsive.

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