

DECLARATION FROM THE NORDIC MINISTERS OF HEALTH - HEALTH PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE IN THE NORDICS

We, the Ministers of Health of the Nordic countries, call for a further strengthening of Nordic cooperation with the aim of strengthening the health preparedness and resilience in the Nordics and Europe as a whole.

Building on the Joint Statement by the Nordic Prime Ministers on extending the cooperation in the field of security of supply and preparedness, we underline the vital role of the European Union and its efforts towards enhancing health preparedness and crisis response. This includes research and development, industrial scale up, and securing an open strategic autonomy for all medical countermeasures. We also recognise free movement and trade as principles in our efforts to strengthen the resilience and preparedness of our societies.

European cooperation has proved to be fundamental in tackling the Covid 19 pandemic. The efforts of Team Europe, both in securing timely vaccines to our population and in sharing vaccines with low- and mid-income countries, have been vital. This includes providing financial support to COVAX. While recognising health as a national competence, we are certain the European Health Union and associated initiatives will make Europe, including the Nordic countries, more resilient towards future health emergencies. We welcome the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, HERA. We are committed to making European cooperation a success and contributing to the European initiatives with our longstanding experience of Nordic cooperation on health preparedness, multisectoral cooperation, cross-border assistance, and development of operational capacities. The Nordic countries' contributions to assist Ukraine, made possible by the EU's infrastructure such as the UCPM and the EWRS, is a sound example of efficient European cooperation.

We, the Nordics, have a unique relationship and cooperate extensively in many areas supporting resilience, preparedness, and crisis response. A joint Nordic feasibility study on innovation, development, and production capacity of vaccines, has recently been launched. We are frontrunners on the secure exchange of health data and data driven research and innovation. Together we can develop health data into a common good. This will progressively strengthen our health systems and our research. Through research and data sharing, the Nordic countries have a unique position in providing evidence on the effectiveness of medical and non-medical interventions in crises, facilitated by digitalisation and use of AI.

Based on exceptional experience in providing inter-regional cross border operational support within health and civil protection, we aim to establish a mechanism ensuring better situational awareness in order to assess possible countermeasures. We need more joint regular exercises and exchange of experience. Acknowledging the positive efforts during the Covid 19 pandemic, we aim for further improvements in removing obstacles towards ensuring responsive assistance between the Nordic countries, such as facilitating timely border crossings for rescue personnel and vehicles.

We stand together in a global health perspective. We believe the world is well served by a multilateral agenda. The Nordic countries will work to strengthen the WHO's leading role in global health.

Stavanger, 25 March 2022