STATEMENT

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Retention of medicines policy in DG Health a victory for public health advocates

Concern remains, however, about possibly expanded role of DG Enterprise and Industry in development of medicines policy

AMSTERDAM—Health Action International (HAI) Europe welcomes the announcement by European Commission president-elect, Jean-Claude Juncker, that health units D5 (medicinal products–authorisations, European Medicines Agency) and D6 (medicinal products–quality, safety and efficacy) will remain in their rightful place at the Directorate General (DG) for Health.

The reversal of president-elect Juncker's initial decision to move medicines policy to the DG for Enterprise and Industry is the successful result of immense objection from civil society organisations working in public health, as well as concerns expressed by European Union member state representatives and Members of the European Parliament.

Despite this achievement, HAI Europe remains concerned that DG Enterprise and Industry's existing role in the development of European medicines policy may be further expanded. Additional industry involvement in this regard will continue to extend the interests and influence of the pharmaceutical industry at the expense of European consumers and patients.

In addition, it remains to be seen how the complex task of collaboratively developing medicines policy will be achieved by two DGs with vastly different objectives and interests. The decision to keep medicines policies under DG Health should not be only symbolic, but effectively address public health issues.

HAI Europe calls upon the new EU health commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis, to use all available means to ensure that public health is not compromised by private sector interests.

We further welcome president-elect Juncker's recognition in his remarks earlier today that "medicines are not goods like any other." This is a crucial and progressive step. We hope that, under his leadership, the Commission will promote policies in all areas of government that have a positive impact on access to medicines for European citizens.

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Health Action International (HAI) is an independent, global network, committed to increasing access to essential medicines and improving their rational use through research excellence and evidence-based advocacy.