

To: Ms Ursula Von Der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Brussels, 21 July 2021

Subject: Call for EU support to European ICU's staff and the incorporation of Intensive Care Medicine as a fundamental pillar in the development of the European Health Union.

Dear President Von der Leyen,

During the first weeks of the first wave of COVID-19 in Europe, ICU teams offered mutual support from one country to another, by accepting critically ill patients into their ICU's. This great act of solidarity is also a symbol of a crisis in intensive care medicine in Europe. In the EU, intensive care medicine qualifications are not currently mutually recognised. In practice it is easier to move ICU patients between countries than for intensivists to move from one country to another, unless very specific criteria are met.

Intensive Care Medicine is a fundamental pillar of our health system and frontline professionals need urgent support from European leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic has put EU health systems under severe strain and has exposed numerous problems in the organisation of these systems. Intensive Care Medicine represents the safety of public health, but has been resorted to as a long-term solution since the start of the pandemic. This is both unsustainable and a threat to the profession, as intensivists continue to work double to provide this safety net at the cost of their own wellbeing. This must not be allowed to repeat in future.

In times of pandemics and other cross-border health threats, Europe needs to be able to organise effective and rapid responses. Clear policies must be developed to invest in the most critical factor in healthcare for saving lives - human resources. Europe must start by investing early in its healthcare capacity, providing not only the necessary training to healthcare professionals, but also removing the obstacles to free movement of Intensivists which is necessary to responding to future cross-border health emergencies.

We strongly believe that intensivists who are able to move freely and take care of critically ill patients in other European countries will contribute to raising the standards of care the EU can offer to its citizens and would represent an important advantage in our preparedness for future pandemics.

It is crucial that the EU takes the lead to guarantee our resilience in future health crises, and this is why we call upon the European Commission to put the challenges faced by the Intensive Care Medicine community at the core of the current EU health initiatives.

We the undersigned Members of European Parliament call for:

- 1) The removal of all bureaucratic obstacles under the existing frameworks of recognition of national Intensive Care Medicine qualifications in other EU Member States;
- 2) Investment in the training and competences of European professionals working in Intensive Care Units;
- 3) An emphasis on synergies between Member States with a view of achieving a fully functioning EU Health Union and better standards of care for European citizens.

In the name of a stronger and more adaptive Intensive Care Medicine community and increased protection of the health of European citizens, we hope that the European Commission will take these concerns into consideration during the construction of the European Health Union.

Yours Sincerely,

Andris Ameriks MEP

Milan Brglez MEP

Sara Cerdas MEP

Olivier Chastel MEP

Tudor Ciuhodaru MEP

Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé MEP

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