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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Collaboration and exchange on Long COVID <i>-- Information from the German and Netherlands delegations, supported by the Austrian, Cyprus, Czech, Finnish, French, Luxembourg, Maltese and Portuguese delegations</i>

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the German and Netherlands delegations, supported by the Austrian, Cyprus, Czech, Finnish, French, Luxembourg, Maltese and Portuguese delegations, on the above mentioned subject to be raised under “Any other business” at the meeting of the EPSCO Council (Health) on 30 November 2023.

AOB: Background Note from Germany and The Netherlands supported by Austria, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Malta and Portugal**Collaboration and exchange on Long COVID**

Many people in the European Union are still suffering from Long COVID. The consequences can be observed on an individual, social and economic level. Directly or indirectly - Long COVID is a syndrome that affects us all. The autumn and winter season, when acute respiratory diseases are more prevalent, could aggravate the situation. It is therefore urgent that much needed research is supported, that adequate care and support is provided to those affected, that awareness of Long COVID is maintained, and that the European Union uses its opportunities to achieve synergy effects in all these areas.

We would like to encourage the support of research and the exchange of research results. We still lack knowledge about the pathogenesis, symptomatology and treatment of Long COVID. We also urgently need more health care research to identify and develop care concepts that meet the needs of those affected. After all, we are dealing with a new, partly unknown syndrome that requires an innovative, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach which takes into account the entire patient pathway. It is therefore important to use available EU funds, such as Horizon Europe, to fund innovative, collaborative research projects in this area.

The Network of Expertise on Long COVID (NELC) under the Commission's Expert Group on Public Health plays a very important role in linking the centres of expertise in the Member States, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and contributing to better coordination and coherence of action. However, the information needs to be actively implemented and complemented by data-driven approaches and health services research. Therefore, we would like to suggest that the EU4Health programme will be used to effectively address this need. In the sense of translational medicine, data, knowledge and scientific findings could be combined to introduce the resulting European state of the art regarding Long COVID into the EU health care systems. This includes the current state of research and current data regarding the syndrome itself, best practices regarding diagnosis, treatment and management of Long COVID, and clinical guidelines.

Especially now that the pandemic is officially over, we also need to make sure that awareness of Long COVID is maintained and that the knowledge among the populations regarding Long COVID is improved. People must have sufficient knowledge to protect themselves and others from infections in order to prevent Long COVID and to be able to act appropriately in the event of illness. Furthermore, authorities and decision-makers must be informed in such a way that they are enabled to make decisions in the best interests of those affected. And, very importantly, health care workers and professionals need to be educated and trained to be able to diagnose and treat Long COVID appropriately. To achieve this, we would appreciate it if member states use NELC to share their educational efforts, so that we can learn from each other in this regard.
