

PRESS RELEASE

New *Lancet* Commission: Accelerating progress on Essential Medicines

28 commissioners from around the world gather in Brussels to launch global collaboration with support from Team Europe MAV+

October 8, 2025 – Brussels, Belgium. Team Europe MAV+ (Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines, and Health Products in Africa) with Belgium support is co-hosting the inaugural meeting of the new Lancet Commission on Essential Medicines. Germany is providing initial funding for the Commission's research.

Essential medicines are those that are needed for the priority health care needs of the population. They are selected on the basis of efficacy, safety, and the best value.

The Lancet Commission: Accelerating Progress on Essential Medicines is a specially appointed commission of the medical journal *The Lancet*, consisting of 28 experts mostly from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). The Commission will collect and review the latest evidence on how all people, especially those who are marginalized, will be able to obtain access to essential medicines as part of universal health care. Its final report will present updated practical recommendations for governments, academia and non-governmental organizations.

“Regular access to essential medicines is key to achieving universal health coverage,” says Veronika Wirtz, a global medicine expert at Boston University and one of the three co-chairs of the Commission. “Yet in many countries, medicines are purchased directly by households instead of financed by governments. This means that poor households will either be unable to purchase needed medicines or suffer catastrophic expenditure.”

The launch of the Lancet Commission comes at a time when many global developments are exerting negative effects on health. In 2021 a staggering 4.5 billion people – about half the world's population – had no access to basic health services both in LMICs but also in high income countries, and progress has stalled since 2019. The percentage of people facing catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditure for health care has risen from 11.9% in 2005 to 16.7% in 2019, with medicines a major contributor.

Global developments also pose a threat to health. The polycrises of climate change, natural disasters, decline in foreign aid and shifting policies and many protracted conflicts have led to millions of displaced people, who lack access to basic services. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and mental health prematurely killed 43 million people in LMICs in 2021, largely due to lack of basic health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed and further worsened global inequity in access to health technologies.

“In the face of all these problems, most low- and middle-income countries will be forced to mobilize more public funds for health,” says Hans Hogerzeil, previously director for essential medicines at the WHO and co-chair of the Commission. “They will also have to use their public funds very efficiently to obtain the best health outcomes for the least money. Focusing on financing and provision of essential medicines is the best way to do this.”

This Lancet Commission is meeting in Brussels in person for the first time to prepare the work for the coming two years. They will be reviewing new evidence from the last decade, critically examining how the concept of essential medicines can be valued, how essential medicines can be financed, how innovations can be used and shared, how public capacity can be strengthened to supply and use essential medicines in a cost-effective way, and how progress can best be measured. In 2027, the final report will be published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first WHO Model List of Essential Medicines. This report will present updated practical recommendations for governments, academia and non-governmental organizations.

Andrew Gray, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and the third co-chair of the Commission, points out, “Governments and policymakers will need to take these recommendations into account when setting national health agendas. They will need to ensure sustainable financing mechanisms, support equitable access, and foster collaboration across sectors to guarantee that every person, regardless of setting, has reliable access to life-saving essential medicines.”

For Team Europe, supporting the Lancet Commission on Essential Medicines is not only a matter of global solidarity but also represents a shared responsibility and a strategic partnership. Ensuring equitable access to essential medicines strengthens health systems, which in turn benefits global health security.

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The following commission co-chairs are available for interviews and further information

Prof Veronika Wirtz, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, USA;
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The full list of Commissioners

	Name	Institution/City/Country
1	Veronika Wirtz	Boston University School of Public Health, USA
2	Hans Hogerzeil	Retired (formerly World Health Organization)
3	Andy Gray	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
4	Brook Baker	Retired (formerly Northeastern University)
5	Chittawan Poonsiri	Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program, Ministry of Health, Thailand
6	Deus Mubangizi	World Health Organization
7	Ellen 't Hoen	Medicines Law and Policy, France
8	Esteban Burrone	Medicine Patent Pool, Switzerland
9	Fatima Suleman	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
10	Hiiti Sillo	World Health Organization
12	Huma Rasheed	Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pakistan
13	Isabel Emmerick	University of Massachusetts, USA

14	Jing Sun	School of Population Medicine and Public Health, Peking Union Medical College, China
15	Katrina Perehudoff	University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
16	Klara Tisocki	Retired (formerly World Health Organization)
17	Libby Roughead	University of South Australia, Australia
18	Max Salcher	Gesundheit Oesterreich GmbH, Austria
19	Melissa Barber	Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), USA
20	Olivier Wouters	Brown University, USA
21	Prashant Yadav	Council for Foreign Relations, USA
22	Saleh Aljadeeah	Institute of Tropical Medicine, Belgium
23	Sangeeta Sharma	Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences, India
24	Shaffi Fazaludeen Koya	World Health Organization (EMRO)
25	Uhjin Kim	World Health Organization (SEARO)
26	Vitor Ido	University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
27	Yusi Anggriani	Universitas Pancasila, Indonesia

About Team Europe MAV+

The [Team Europe Initiative on Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies in Africa \(MAV+\)](#) was launched in May 2021 in response to the call from the African leaders to step up local manufacturing of vaccines in Africa for Africa in line with the Partnerships for African Vaccine Manufacturing launched by the African Union.

As part of the EU's Global Gateway strategy, MAV+ is working to create an enabling environment for the industry, train a skilled workforce in the sector, strengthen the regulatory environment, and support African research and technology transfer. This



Belgium
partner in development



flagship initiative ultimately promotes equitable access to quality, safe, effective and affordable health products. In total, including the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator contribution, Team Europe is dedicating around €2 billion to this agenda across the continent in close collaboration with African and international partners.

MAV+ is funded by the European Commission, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the European Investment Bank.

About DGD

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) looks after the various aspects of Belgian Development Cooperation. DGD falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2025. The DGD is integrated into the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation which is organising and elaborating development cooperation in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework. More [info](#).