

EPHA's Board Statement

Opening Remarks to General Assembly 2025

(June 2025)

One year ago, we took on a challenge that was both demanding and inspiring. We knew that we would face difficulties and challenges, but we chose to move forward, together. Since then, our journey has been marked by tough lessons and significant achievements.

Today, we meet at a pivotal moment. The world around us is shifting fast. If we are to respond, we must break free from outdated thinking. As the saying goes: *"We cannot solve tomorrow's problems with yesterday's thinking."*

We need to shape a New Growth Model: one that puts people first, balances growth with sustainability, and recognises security - in all its forms - as central to wellbeing. But this is not only about economics. It is about democracy itself. When healthcare systems fail, trust in public institutions erodes. Health is no longer solely a matter for ministries, it is at the very heart of democratic stability.

And let us be clear: we are entering an era of **permanent emergency**. Climate change, conflict, displacement, pandemics, and fragmentation are no longer isolated shocks; they define the landscape in which we operate.

The EU's founding principles remain powerful: peace, open markets, shared values, solidarity. Europe must not become an isolated front. The Brussels Effect has global implications and repercussions. This is a responsibility we must all share and work towards.

Institutions like the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) are essential. But civil society plays an equally critical role. We are the voice ensuring that policies serve people, that no one is left behind, and that equity remains the compass guiding European health.

This brings us to the central question: how do public institutions and civil society co-lead a truly agile, inclusive, and resilient health system for Europe?

In this period of profound uncertainty, civil society must not retreat into the margins. We must step forward as indispensable actors in European health governance. Only through genuine collaboration with policymakers, academia, and the scientific community can we ensure that Europe emerges not only stronger, but fairer, more democratic, and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

The challenge is clear. So is our responsibility.

- We face a new reality: permanent emergencies, growing inequalities, democratic fragility.
- Health is no longer a sector - it is a pillar of democracy, security, and social cohesion.
- Institutions alone cannot deliver the solutions Europe needs.
- Civil society must step forward - not as observers, but as essential partners.

Let us move from words to the commitments we have agreed together with our partner NGOs. They are built upon seven pillars:

1. Advocacy and health policy
2. Impact of war on public health
3. Healthcare workforce and mental health
4. Community health resilience
5. Emergency preparedness
6. Access to healthcare
7. Europe's role in global health

Above all, we share a mission that transcends organisations: to serve the common good, by empowering citizens and their communities to engage, to act, and to hold us all accountable for the future of public health in Europe.

The time to act is now.

Dr Paolo Lauriola, EPHA President

Dr Tadeusz Jędrzejczyk, EPHA Vice-President

Mr George Sultana, EPHA Treasurer