



AERAP Science, FIND and *The Lancet* Commission on diagnostics join with partners to call on decision-makers at the 6th EU-AU Summit to address urgent diagnostic gaps in support of universal health coverage

- **The diagnostics crisis in Africa needs political, policy, scientific, education and funding solutions in parallel: without this, the health crisis will deepen**
- **Session held as part of the AERAP Science event on the side-lines of the EU-AU Summit, calling on leaders to embrace the conclusions of *The Lancet* Commission on diagnostics, reflect these priority actions in the conclusions of the Summit, and commit to robust country implementation plans**

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM & GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – 15 February 2022. Africa-Europe Science and Innovation Platform (AERAP) Science, FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics, and *The Lancet* Commission on diagnostics are today hosting a session on the side-lines of the EU-AU Summit, [*The diagnostics crisis in Africa needs political, policy, scientific, education and funding solutions in parallel: without this, the health crisis will deepen*](#). The session calls on decision-makers at the EU-AU Summit to address urgent diagnostic gaps in support of universal health coverage (UHC).

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that access to timely, accurate diagnostics is fundamental to effective healthcare. Yet today, almost half the world's population has little or no access to even the simplest of tests. The problems are most severe and acute in primary and community care – in low- and middle-income countries, basic tests are available in just 1% of primary care clinics. The result is not only blindness to current and emerging health threats, it also puts the achievement of the global goal of UHC in jeopardy.

The EU-AU Summit is an important forum for policy prioritization and programme setting. At the event, African nations will be advancing an inclusive approach that creates an environment for policy co-design, and regulation co-design. The EU will set out its new funding mechanism, the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), also known as Global Europe.

While health will be a priority for the summit, it may not include sufficient focus on capacity building for diagnostics. Addressing shortfalls in diagnostic testing must be considered a priority. Deficiencies impact the whole care cascade – affecting medical workforces, education, research, physical infrastructure, supply chain, data collection, and management – but the root causes are more straightforward. Lack of political prioritization, resource allocation and finance, and lack of

effective regulation for governance and quality are stymying efforts to build sustainable, resilient health systems that can deliver health for all.

A two-pronged approach, focused on both policy and implementation, is critical, and must be underpinned by long-term (>20 year) commitments and funding. Solutions fall into several categories, all of which are aimed at optimizing scant resources.

1. **Establish national diagnostics strategies to support National Health Plans, including the development and implementation of national Essential Diagnostics Lists (EDLs).** Diagnostic testing must be acknowledged as a key enabler for health, and supported by adequate funding, for example through national financing strategies for diagnostics, and coverage of diagnostics for key conditions in UHC benefits packages. Setting up EDLs in 5–6 pilot countries, half of which could be in Africa through EU support, would enable lessons to be learned for broader implementation.
2. **Make key basic diagnostic tests available at primary health centres, as a key step towards UHC.** This includes the availability of accurate, reliable point-of-care tests that are linked to radiology and pathology and laboratory medicine (PaLM) systems to provide “see and treat” at one visit, ensure seamless handover between health facilities and tiers, and enable appropriate patient follow up. Digital tools can also support community health workers with tasks that may previously have been restricted to specialized clinics.
3. **Invest in an expanded workforce with the skilling and upgrading needed to support advances in diagnostics.** Training programmes are needed to increase the number of technicians, scientists and pathologists to a base level, and enable task shifting that can reduce both the time and cost of training fully qualified specialists. Regional/transnational networks should be activated to optimize both training and capacity of staff. Technology such as artificial intelligence and digital decision support tools can also support tasks such as image interpretation at lower levels of the health system.
4. **Commit to enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for diagnostics in Africa.** Context-appropriate, simple accreditation processes are needed to ensure affordable, high-quality tests can be made available where they are needed as quickly as possible.
5. **Improve infrastructure, including supporting the expansion of local and regional manufacturing capacity.** This must include initiatives to streamline supply chains, equipment purchase and maintenance, IT and mobile developments to improve data flow and communications, alongside development of robust, affordable and context-appropriate Laboratory Information and Management Systems.

With the content of this session we are calling on the European Union and the African Union, including African states to use NDICI/Global Europe, in cooperation with African partners, to embrace and implement the conclusions of *The Lancet* Commission on diagnostics, reflect these priority actions in the conclusions of the Summit, and commit to robust and sustained country implementation plans.

The diagnostics crisis in Africa needs political, policy, scientific, education and funding solutions in parallel: without this, the health crisis will deepen will take place online, on Tuesday 15 February 2022, at 16:00–17:00 CET. Registration is free, please sign up [here](#).

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About FIND

FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics, seeks to ensure equitable access to reliable diagnosis around the world. We connect countries and communities, funders, decision-makers, healthcare providers and developers to spur diagnostic innovation and make testing an integral part of sustainable, resilient health systems. We are working to save 1 million lives through accessible, quality diagnosis, and save US\$1 billion in healthcare costs to patients and health systems. We are co-convenor of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator diagnostics pillar, and a WHO Collaborating Centre for Laboratory Strengthening and Diagnostic Technology Evaluation. For more information, please visit www.finddx.org

About *The Lancet* Commission on diagnostics

The Lancet Commission on Diagnostics, published in October 2021 puts forward recommendations to accelerate and transform access to diagnostics globally. Diagnostics are an essential part of a well functioning and high-quality health system. Yet, almost half of the global population has little or no access to diagnostics. There is an urgent need to strengthen diagnostics for future pandemic preparedness but also beyond pandemics. Diagnostics are central to an accurate diagnosis of communicable and non-communicable diseases, to guide therapy, monitor progress, and assess response to treatment.

<https://diagnosticscommission.org/>

About AERAP Science

The Africa-Europe Science Collaboration and Innovation Platform (AERAP) is a stakeholder forum convened to define priorities for science and innovation cooperation between Africa and Europe. It provides a framework for stakeholders from industry and academia to define research action plans across the wide range of technological areas that will be essential for addressing common challenges and future. This framework will enable major research and technological advances that will drive socioeconomic development and competitiveness in both Africa and Europe. <https://aerapscience.org/>

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