

Labour's NHS pledge is pie in the sky.

This week Labour pledged an additional £37 billion of NHS funding, which sounds to me, as Shadow Health Secretary, like poorly-thought-out, pie in the sky policy.

You can't solve the crisis in our NHS and social care services by simply imposing more top-down targets on staff and plucking numbers out of thin air.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party with a fully costed plan to deliver £6bn more per year for the NHS and social care by putting a penny on income tax.

We are the only party that are prepared to be honest with the public that giving the NHS and social care the funding they need will mean us all chipping in a little more.

A group of 26 leading health experts, including the former chief executive of the NHS David Nicholson, have all backed our plans on the NHS in a letter to the Observer today.

To add your voice to theirs and back our plan to save the NHS and social care:

Be a voter: young people must make their voice heard

[According to the Electoral Commission](#), almost 90 per cent of those eligible to vote in Scotland are registered. But for people aged 18 to 34 more than a quarter of those who can vote are not registered.

Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator Christos

[Stylianides on the Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

Following the declaration of an Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the EU is fully committed to provide all support necessary.

The national authorities, with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the European Commission's experts in the country as well as international medical NGOs, have set in motion initial measures to respond to the situation.

The European Commission's Emergency response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is taking necessary preparedness measures for a potential EU intervention in case the European Medical Corps and logistical capacities would be needed. In this regard we are in close contact with our Member States.

In these early days of the outbreak our priority must be to maintain close and efficient coordination with the national authorities, the WHO, EU Member States, international partners and NGOs on the ground.

The EU was at the forefront of the response to the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa in 2013-2016. This new outbreak is a stark reminder that we can never let our guard down.

Vigilance, early warning, coordination and preparedness are the best tools to prevent further spread of the outbreak.

[Press release – MEPs urge EU countries to speed up transfer of refugees from Italy and Greece](#)

MEPs will urge EU countries on Tuesday morning to accelerate the transfer of refugees from Italy and Greece to other member states, as agreed in September 2015.

Under two Council decisions adopted in September 2015, member states committed to relocate 160,000 asylum-seekers from these two "frontline"

countries by September 2017, but only 18,418 persons have been moved (as of 11 May). Following the plenary debate with Council and Commission representatives, MEPs will vote on a resolution on Thursday.

You can watch the plenary debate at 9.00 on Tuesday via [EP Live](#), and [EbS+](#).

Background

Against the background of severe migration and refugee crises in the summer of 2015, the EU adopted two emergency decisions to relocate thousands of refugees. 160,000 asylum seekers with a high chance of being granted refugee status from Italy and Greece were to be relocated by September 2017 to other member states where their applications would be processed.

In a subsequent decision approved by the Council in September 2016 – which was opposed by Parliament – member states agreed that 54,000 out of the 160,000 places could be used for the admission of Syrian refugees from Turkey, as part of the EU-Turkey migration deal, rather than from Italy or Greece.

According to UNHCR data, around 50,000 asylum-seekers are still stuck in Greece, while Italy faced a new record in 2016 with 181.436 new arrivals.

[Speech by Jyrki Katainen, Vice President of the European Commission at the Leaders' Roundtable of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation](#)

[Mr. President, your Excellencies.]

On behalf of the European Union it is a pleasure to be here in Beijing at the Belt and Road Forum, together with so many countries with an interest in enhancing connectivity.

The EU has been working with China on this issue since President Xi Jinping's visit in March 2014. We have begun to reflect on how we could extend the concept of connectivity to Asia as a whole.

Connectivity is about transcending borders. It is about openness, and the

opportunity that brings. And addressing the concerns that people have.

The last year has seen rising pressure in many of our countries – and elsewhere – to reverse the tide of globalisation. But we know that tides cannot be stopped. We should focus instead on channelling globalisation into improving our lives – and making sure there is space in the boat for all our citizens.

Last week the European Commission published its own reflection paper on ‘harnessing globalisation’. This made clear that we see the future in terms of rules-based trade and investment. We want to work with our partners to ensure we keep markets open on a reciprocal basis to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Through investments of up to ten trillion dollars per year in transport, energy, and communications networks, we are essentially rewiring the planet. Asia has important infrastructure needs and it is in Europe’s interest to contribute.

China is at one end of the ‘Belt and Road’ – Europe is at the other. Done the right way, more investment in cross-border links could unleash huge growth potential with benefits for us all.

The European Union is already one of the biggest trade and investment partners of all Asian countries. Our economic prosperity is deeply interdependent – both ways.

We welcomed President Xi Jinping’s speeches at Davos and Geneva, and his commitments on behalf of China to free trade, multilateralism and sustainable development.

More than ever, we must all work together to put these principles into practice, and to uphold the rules-based international system which underpins our the prosperity and security of all our citizens.

If we get it right, 21st century connectivity can also help the poorer parts of the world get a fairer share of the proceeds of globalisation. And it can bring the kind of economic development that helps to address the root causes of migration.

For connectivity to fulfil this promise, any scheme to connect Europe and Asia should adhere to the following principles.

- It should be an **open initiative** based on market rules and international standards.
- It should include **all modes of transport**, as well as digital and energy and people-to-people contacts.
- It should **complement existing networks and policies**. In the EU’s case, we have decades of experience with the Trans-European Networks, which are now being extended into our neighbourhood, East and South.
- European and Asian infrastructure should not be designed in isolation.

We need to build a **true network and not a patchwork**.

- Infrastructure networks must be **interoperable**. We want to bring down barriers, not create new ones.
- **Transparency** on our plans and activities must be the basis for our cooperation, and all partners should have a fair say about where the priorities lie. Multilateral frameworks like ASEM, should be used wherever possible.
- **Sustainability** is essential: projects must be economically viable, fiscally and socially responsible, as well as climate and environment-friendly.
- We must use the **wisdom of the multilateral banks**, whose decades of experience makes them an invaluable partner for new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.
- Finally, we should ensure that **there are real benefits** for all stakeholders. Not only for countries, but also for economic operators, who should have a fair chance to compete for business through open, transparent and non-discriminatory procurement procedures. A level-playing field for trade and investment is a critical condition if we want to maintain the political momentum and support for better connectivity between Europe and Asia.

The European Union is proud to work with China and other partners on improving connectivity between us. Finding synergies between our policies and projects will bring real benefits. The EU-China connectivity platform exemplifies this approach.

In times of growing tensions and geopolitical unpredictability, we all bear a common responsibility to work together towards a more co-operative, rules-based global order that can bring our citizens together in peace and prosperity.