

The EU's new health programme: EU4Health

On 28 May 2020, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on the establishment of a programme for the Union's action in the field of health for the 2021-2027 period (EU4Health programme). It was announced as part of the Next Generation EU recovery instrument, aimed at countering the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The July European Council meeting reduced the programme's budget from the initially proposed €9.4 billion to €1.7 billion. In its report, European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety proposes, inter alia, to restore EU4Health's initial budget. Parliament is expected to vote on the report during the November I plenary session. This would open the way for trilogue negotiations.

Background

According to the Commission, the coronavirus pandemic [has shown](#) that the EU needs more coordination between Member States during a health crisis; more capacity at EU level to prepare for and to fight health crises; and more investment in health systems to make sure they are ready for future challenges. The idea is that the EU4Health programme will be a [comprehensive response to the political demand](#) to reflect the lessons learned from both the coronavirus crisis and previous health programmes. The current, [third, health programme](#) for the 2014-2020 period succeeds what were referred to, respectively, as the 'public health programme' (2003-2007) and the 'second health programme' (2008-2013).

European Commission proposal

The Commission [has proposed](#) a stand-alone programme with [three main priorities](#): tackling cross-border health threats; making medicines available and affordable; and strengthening health systems. EU4Health will be embedded in the 'one health' approach, support implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), and make sure the EU and the Member States reach the targets of [sustainable development goal \(SDG\) 3](#). Under the initial proposal, EU4Health would have a budget of €10.4 billion (in current prices, or €9.4 billion in constant 2018 prices). However, during the [ongoing negotiations](#) on the EU's 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU recovery instrument ([NGEU](#)), the budget allocated to EU4Health has been revised downwards compared with that originally proposed.

European Parliament position

Parliament has consistently promoted a coherent EU [public health policy](#). A May 2020 [resolution](#) called for a new stand-alone EU health programme to be created. An April 2020 [resolution](#) called for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Medicines Agency to be strengthened, and for a European health response mechanism. Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted its report on the EU4Health proposal on 14 October 2020. It suggests to put a stronger focus on disease prevention and health promotion, reducing health inequalities and ensuring equal access to health, and to strengthen the [EU's fight against cancer](#) in synergy with the [forthcoming Europe's Beating Cancer plan](#), not least through the creation of a European Cancer Institute. To ensure effective implementation, the report proposes to set up a steering group of public-health experts. Once the Parliament formally adopts its position, interinstitutional trilogue negotiations could begin. The Council agreed its [negotiating mandate](#) on 21 October 2020, setting EU4Health's budget at €1.9 billion in current prices, corresponding to the €1.7 billion in constant prices agreed by the European Council.

First-reading report: [2020/0102\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (EPP, Romania). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).

