

EU4Health: 9.4 billion EUR budget needed for new EU health programme

- EU must invest more in strengthening healthcare systems
- Support for digitalisation of healthcare through European eHealth Record
- Health inequalities must be reduced



MEPs want to strengthen health systems to make them more resilient in case of health crises such as COVID-19. ©AFP/Lara Balais

To fill gaps exposed by COVID-19 and ensure that health systems can face future threats to public health, an ambitious EU health programme is needed, say MEPs.

On Wednesday, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted its report on the programme for the EU's action in the health sector, the so-called "[EU4Health Programme](#)" with 74 votes to 5 and 1 abstention.

MEPs want to raise the budget for the programme to EUR 9.4 billion, as originally proposed by the Commission, to enhance health promotion and make health systems more resilient across the EU. COVID-19 has shown that the EU is in urgent need of an ambitious EU health programme to ensure that European health systems can face future health threats. This is not possible if the budget is reduced to EUR 1.7 billion as proposed by member states.

To reach the programme's objectives, the report proposes, inter alia, to:

- focus more on disease prevention
- reduce health inequalities
- digitalise healthcare through the creation and application of the European eHealth Record
- address resistance to vaccination in the EU
- strengthen the European Union's fight against cancer in synergy with the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan
- prevent and manage chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes
- take more specific actions to address medicine shortages and make better use of antimicrobials, such as antibiotics
- promote health by addressing health risks — such as the harmful use of alcohol and tobacco.

To ensure it is implemented effectively, MEPs propose to set up a Steering Group consisting of independent experts in the field of public health.

MEPs also want to increase cooperation at EU level to improve readiness in case of a health crisis. They call for the mandates of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to be strengthened.

Quote

After the vote, Parliament's rapporteur [Cristian-Silviu Buşoi](#) (EPP, Romania) said: "The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the need for well-defined and adequately-financed health instruments as well as for boosting innovation and investing more in health in general. It will be crucial to increase funding for the EU4Health Programme to €9.4 billion, as proposed by the Commission in May, in order to have the capacity to deal with future pandemics and health threats, and to make our health systems more resilient."

Next steps

Parliament is expected to vote on this report at the latest during the 11-12 November plenary session, after which Parliament is ready to start negotiations with member states so that the

programme can be implemented from the beginning of 2021.

Background

On 28 May 2020, the Commission put forward a new stand-alone [EU4Health Programme](#) for 2021-2027 as part of the Recovery Plan to build resilient health systems in the EU by tackling cross-border health threats, making medicines available and affordable, and strengthening health systems. The Health Programme was previously under the initial EU long-term budget 2021-2027 as one element of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

Further information

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[Draft report, compromise amendments, amendments, voting list](#)

[EP Research briefing on the EU4health programme](#)

[Commission's proposal for an EU Health Programme](#)

[Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)

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