Health threats: boosting EU readiness and crisis management

The EU4Health programme aims to strengthen Europe’s health systems to better respond to future major international crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

EU4Health's priorities:
• Protect people from serious international health threats
• Improve the availability of medicines
• Strengthen health systems

EU4Health is part of the Next Generation EU recovery plan.

On 13 November 2020, the Parliament adopted its position on the new EU health programme. MEPs called for a European Health Response Mechanism to boost cooperation at EU level in times of crisis, a European monitoring system for shortages of medicines and medical devices, greater focus on disease prevention and digitalisation through a European eHealth Record.

In the provisional agreement on the EU's budget for 2021-2027 reached on 10 November, Parliament’s team negotiated an increase in the budget for this programme from €1.7 billion
The programme will cover the **2021-2027 period**, but all measures relating to the post crisis recovery are set to be applied in the first years.

## What does EU4Health cover?

### Tackling cross-border health threats

The programme aims to strengthen prevention, preparedness, surveillance and response in crisis times and improve the coordination of emergency capacity. It aims to build reserves of medicines and medical supplies, healthcare staff and experts and provide technical assistance.

RescEU, which is part of the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism**, will continue to provide rapid reaction and focus on direct crisis response capacities, while EU4Health would include strategic medical stockpiles for longer-term use and a reserve of medical staff who could be employed in case of a crisis. The programme will also support efforts to digitalise healthcare, action linked to e-health and the creation of a **European health data space** to promote the exchange and access to different types of health data.

### Making medicines and medical supplies available and affordable

The EU wants to support efforts to monitor shortages of medicines, medical devices and other healthcare products relevant in a crisis and limit the dependency on imports of medicines and active pharmaceutical ingredients from non-EU countries. It also aims to boost innovation and more environmentally friendly production.

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"The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that EU health policies need to be reinforced. The European Parliament has committed to using EU Health Programme funds to create real added value to protect the future health of Europeans by joining our health forces"

Pascal Canfin
Chair of the environment and public health committee
Strengthen health systems and healthcare workforce

National health systems should become more efficient and resilient by: boosting investment in disease prevention programmes; supporting the exchange of best practices; global cooperation; and improving access to health care.

Tackling long-term challenges

EU4Health aims to address issues such as:

- Providing affordable good quality healthcare to all, by removing health inequalities
- Scaling up the use of digital innovations
- Tackling non-communicable diseases by improving diagnosis, prevention and care, in particular cancer (through the Beating Cancer Plan), cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, mental health (the goal is to reduce premature mortality by one third by 2030)
- Advocating the prudent use of antibiotics and fighting antimicrobial resistance
- Improving vaccination coverage rates in EU countries
- Expanding successful initiatives, such as the European Reference Networks connecting healthcare professionals to support patients affected by rare diseases
- Tackling the impact of environmental pollution and demographic changes, including an ageing population, on public health

Check out what the EU is doing to help Europe's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic

EU4Health will strengthen national systems by funding initiatives such as:

- Tailor made support and advice to countries
- Training for healthcare professionals for deployment across the EU
- Audits of member states’ preparedness and response arrangements
- Clinical trials to speed up the development of medicines and vaccines
- Cross-border collaboration and partnerships
- Conducting studies, data collection and benchmarking

Parliament is asking for a European Health Union

In a resolution adopted on 10 July 2020, Parliament set out its principles for a post Covid EU health strategy. MEPs again stressed the need to draw the right lessons from the coronavirus pandemic, calling for a European Health Union with stronger tools to deal with future health emergencies.
On 11 November, the Commission presented a set of proposals for creating a European Health Union. These include strengthening the EU’s crisis management to cope with serious cross-border health threats and stronger mandates for the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and the European Medicines Agency.

Parliament had consistently promoted the establishment of a coherent EU public health policy. In a resolution adopted on 17 April 2020, Parliament also called for a dedicated budget to support national healthcare sectors during the crisis, as well as for investment post-crisis to make health-care systems more resilient and focused on those most in need.
Find out more
Adopted text
Watch the plenary debate
Press release: Parliament gives green light for new EU4Health programme
Q&A on the new EU4Health programme
Parliament's special committee on beating cancer
Study: EU public health policies (September 2019)
Briefing: cross-border threats to health (January 2020)
Briefing: EU4Health programme (February 2021)
At a glance: EU4Health programme (March 2021)