[Press release – EU4Health: MEPs pave the way for an effective EU health programme](#)

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On Friday, Parliament adopted its position on the Commission proposal to step up the EU's action in the health sector significantly, through the so-called "[EU4Health Programme](#)" with 615 votes to 34 and 39 abstentions.

COVID-19 has shown that the EU urgently needs an ambitious programme to ensure that European health systems can face future health threats, so that the EU remains the healthiest region in the world, MEPs say. According to Parliament, this would not have been possible had the budget been reduced to €1.7 billion as proposed by member states. In the recent [compromise on the EU's long-term budget](#), MEPs convinced them to triple the budget for the programme ([€5.1 billion](#)).

Cross-border health threats

EU4Health is intended to prepare the EU more thoroughly for major cross-border health threats and make health systems more resilient. This should enable the EU to face not only future epidemics, but also long-term challenges such as an ageing population and inequalities in health.

MEPs also want to increase cooperation at EU level to be better prepared in

case of a health crisis i.e. by supporting the creation of a European Health Response Mechanism. An EU communication portal for the public should also be set up to share information that has been thoroughly checked, to send alerts to European citizens and fight against disinformation. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) should have stronger mandates.

Ensuring medicines and medical devices are available and affordable in all member states

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the many weaknesses of national health systems including their dependence on non-EU countries to supply medicines, medical devices as well as personal protective equipment. The programme should therefore support the development of a European system for monitoring, reporting and notifying shortages of medicines, medical devices, vaccines, diagnostic tools, and other healthcare products. This would prevent the single market from becoming fragmented and ensure that those products are more available and affordable. Their supply chains would also be less dependent on non-EU countries.

To reach the programme's objectives, the report also proposes greater focus on disease prevention by addressing health risks such as the harmful use of alcohol and tobacco , more robust health systems and digitalised healthcare by creating and applying the European eHealth Record. MEPs also want to achieve universal health coverage including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and to strengthen the EU's fight against cancer in synergy with Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

To ensure the programme is implemented effectively, MEPs propose setting up a Steering Group consisting of independent public health experts.

Quote

After the vote, Parliament's rapporteur [Cristian-Silviu Buşoi](#) (EPP, RO) said: "The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the need for well-defined and adequately-financed health instruments. We also need to boost innovation and invest more in health in general. It was crucial to increase funding for the EU4Health Programme from €1.7 billion to €5.1 billion in order to be able to deal with future pandemics and health threats, and to make our health systems more resilient."

Next steps

Parliament is now 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. The Health Programme was previously under the initial EU long-term budget 2021-2027 as one element of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).