[Press release – Parliament wants a European Health Union](#)

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In a resolution adopted on Friday by 526 votes to 105 and 50 abstentions, the European Parliament sets out the principles of the EU's future public health strategy post-COVID-19.

MEPs underline the need to draw the right lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and engage in far stronger cooperation in the area of health to create a European Health Union. This should include common minimum standards for quality healthcare, based on urgently needed stress tests of member states' healthcare systems to identify weaknesses and verify that they are prepared for a possible resurgence of COVID-19.

The resolution calls for a European Health Response Mechanism to be created rapidly to respond to all types of health crises through better coordination and management of the strategic reserve of medicines and medical equipment. The upcoming EU pharmaceutical strategy must contain measures to make essential medicines more immediately available in Europe. Diversified supply chains need to be put in place to guarantee affordable access at all times.

The new dedicated 9.4 billion EUR [EU4Health Programme](#) is strongly welcomed and MEPs believe that long-term investments and commitments are needed. They request the establishment of a dedicated EU fund to improve hospital infrastructure and health services. On top of that, the European health

agencies [ECDC](#) and [EMA](#), as well as joint health research, must be strengthened.

With the COVID-19 crisis ongoing, MEPs also reiterate their call for affordable access for all people worldwide to future COVID-19 vaccines and treatments as soon as they are available. Joint EU procurement must be used more systematically to avoid competition between member states when public health is at stake.

Background

Primary responsibility for public health and, in particular, healthcare systems lies with the member states. However, the EU has an important role to play in improving public health, preventing and managing diseases, mitigating sources of danger to human health, and harmonising health strategies between member states.

Parliament has consistently promoted the establishment of a coherent EU public health policy and in a [resolution on the post-2020 EU budget revision and economic recovery plan](#), MEPs insisted that a new stand-alone European health programme should be created.

The Commission has since presented a proposal for 9.4 billion EUR [EU4Health](#) programme for 2021-2027 as part of the [Next Generation EU recovery plan](#).

To watch the plenary debate, click [here](#) (08.07.2020).