



## Questions and Answers on the New EU4Health Programme

Brussels, 28 May 2020

### **What is the new EU4Health Programme and how will it contribute to improving health systems in the EU?**

The Commission has proposed a new, ambitious stand-alone health programme for the 2021-2027 period – the **EU4Health** Programme.

EU4Health will make a significant contribution to the post-COVID-19 recovery by making the EU population healthier, strengthening the resilience of health systems, and promoting innovation in the health sector. This new programme will also fill the gaps revealed by the COVID-19 crisis and ensure that EU health systems are resilient enough to face new and future health threats.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need to significantly boost the EU's preparedness and capability to respond effectively to major cross border health threats.

It has in particular demonstrated 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 the challenges of tomorrow.

With the EU4Health Programme, it will now be possible for the EU to:

- invest in creating reserves of medical supplies in case of a crisis;
- create a reserve of healthcare staff and experts that can be mobilised to prevent or respond to health crises throughout the EU;
- train healthcare professionals for deployment across the EU;
- step up surveillance of health threats, and
- improve the resilience of health systems to ensure better health outcomes for all.

This will allow the EU to have more and stronger tools to take quick, decisive and coordinated action with Member States in both preparing for and managing crises, as well as improving the functioning and performance of EU health systems overall.

### **What are the main objectives of the EU4Health Programme?**

The EU4Health programme has three general objectives:

1. protecting people in the EU from serious cross-border health threats and improving crisis management capacity;
2. making medicines, medical devices and other crisis relevant products, available and affordable and supporting innovation;
3. strengthen health systems and the health care workforce, including by investing in public health, for instance through health promotion and disease prevention programmes and improving access to healthcare.

Beyond crisis preparedness and response, the EU4Health Programme will address other important long-term challenges for health systems, in particular:

- inequalities in health status among population groups, countries and regions, and access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality;
- burden from non-communicable diseases, in particular cancer, mental health, rare diseases and risks from health determinants;
- uneven distribution of health care systems capacity;

- obstacles to the wide uptake and best use of digital innovations as well their scaling up;
- growing health burden from environmental degradation and pollution, in particular air, water and soil quality, and also from demographic changes.

### **How much funding will be available under the EU4Health programme and how will it be spent?**

Through the EU4Health Programme, the Commission proposes to invest €9.4 billion in strengthening health systems. This is compared to the previous Commission proposal for a health strand under the European Social Fund+ of €413 million. The funding will partly come from the EU budget (€1.7 billion), partly via external assigned revenues, stemming from the borrowing operations of the Union as set out in the EU Recovery Instrument Regulation (€7.7 billion). There will be no pre-allocation for each of the objectives mentioned in the programme. The distribution will be agreed upon during the implementation of the EU4Health programme.

Different types of actions can be funded in future in the different areas covered by the programme. These include but are not limited to:

- Country-specific tailor made support and advice to countries, or groups of countries, with the highest needs, through twinning, expert advice and peer support, etc;
- Training and exchange programmes for medical and healthcare staff;
- New mechanisms for instance for procurement of goods and services necessary for the prevention and management of health crises;
- Audits, e.g. of Member States preparedness and response arrangements (such as crisis management, antimicrobial resistance, vaccination) to ensure their effectiveness;
- Clinical trials to speed up the development, authorisation and access to innovative, safe and effective medicines and vaccines;
- Cross-border collaboration and partnerships, including in cross-border regions, with a view to transferring and upscaling innovative solutions, including digital, for instance through the European Reference Networks (ERNs);
- Setting up and coordination of Union Reference Laboratories and Centres of Excellence;
- Investment in precursory projects for high-value-added initiatives and in critical health infrastructure;
- Deployment, operation and maintenance of digital service infrastructure;
- Analytical activities such as studies, data collection and benchmarking.

A full list of possible actions can be found in Annex I of the EU4Health proposal.

### **How will non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, be addressed in the new programme?**

Non-communicable and life style related diseases are among the biggest challenges facing EU health systems. Non-communicable diseases as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes, represent major causes of disability, ill-health, health-related retirement, and premature death in the Union, resulting in considerable social and economic costs.

To decrease the impact of non-communicable diseases on individuals and society and to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030, it is key to focus on prevention, combined with efforts to strengthen health systems. EU4Health will support disease prevention (including screening and early diagnosis) and health promotion programmes in Member States.

The EU Reference Networks (ERNs) for rare, low prevalence and complex diseases, will be expanded to cover other rare non-communicable as well as infectious diseases, allowing medical knowledge and expertise to travel rather than the patients.

### **When will the EU4Health funding become available? Does it respond to the current Coronavirus crisis?**

The EU4Health programme covers the period 2021-2027. It takes into account the lessons learnt and gaps revealed by the crisis to date, and will put in place structural changes to better prepare the EU for further health challenges. Once the proposal is adopted by Member States and the European Parliament, the intention is to start launching specific actions under EU4Health as of 1 January 2021. There will be a significant focus on action in the early years of the programme, in particular on crisis management.

## **Does EU4Health respect Member States' competence in health?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that better coordination and cooperation are needed between EU Member States in times of crises. EU4Health will work with Member States, respecting the division of competences in health policy set out in Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and drawing on existing cooperation mechanisms, focusing on strategic and cross-border aspects. Under Article 168 TFEU, the Union is to complement and support national health policies, encourage cooperation between Member States and promote the coordination between their programmes. This should take place in full respect of the responsibilities of the Member States to define their health policies and to organise and deliver health services and medical care.

## **How will EU4Health be implemented and what will be the role of EU agencies?**

EU4Health will be implemented by Member States, non-governmental and international organisations who can apply for EU funding in the form of grants, prizes and procurement as well as through indirect management by the European Commission and EU executive agencies.

The EU agencies, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), have a key role to play in Europe's defence against serious cross border health threats and pandemics, both on the prevention and on the crisis management front. The programme's actions will complement and enhance the work of these EU Agencies.

## **Will the Commission continue to provide health funding through the European Social Fund+ and other EU funds?**

With the adoption of the EU4Health programme, the Commission is adapting its proposal for the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), fully integrating its health strand into the EU4Health Programme.

Whilst the EU4Health is the most ambitious health programme ever, important investments in health in the next long-term budget will also be made through other funding instruments working in synergy with EU4Health:

- the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to support vulnerable groups in accessing healthcare;
- the European Regional and Development Fund to improve regional health infrastructure;
- Horizon Europe for health research and innovation;
- rescEU to create stockpiles for emergency medical supplies, and
- the Digital Europe Programme for creating the digital infrastructure needed for digital health tools.

Working across programmes, and having shared objectives between policies will be key.

## **What is the difference between the stockpiling under EU4health and the rescEU capacities programme?**

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism will provide the rapid reaction and focus on the direct crisis response capacities, and the EU4Health Programme will include strategic medical stockpiles for longer-term use and other strategic reserves. These would include a reserve of medical, healthcare and support staff that can be mobilised in case of a crisis and a Union Health Emergency team consisting of experts that can be called in to help in the assessment and response coordination.

## **How will the programme support research and innovation?**

EU4Health will work closely with the EU's main research and innovation programme, Horizon Europe, which includes a health cluster. Horizon Europe will finance research and innovation on topics such as life-long good health; environmental and social health determinants; non-communicable and rare diseases; infectious diseases; tools, technologies and digital solutions for health and care and healthcare systems. It will also include a research and innovation mission on cancer, one of the Commission's top priorities in health policy. The EU4Health Programme will help to ensure best use of research results and facilitate the uptake, scale-up and deployment of health innovation in healthcare systems and clinical practice.

## **For more information**

[Factsheet: EU4Health Programme](#)

[EU long-term budget 2021-2027: Commission Proposal May 2020](#)

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