Biomedical Alliance in Europe

Strong health funding in MFF is essential for the wellbeing of EU citizens

The European Commission has recently presented its proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) from 2028-2034 which includes an ambitious overall budget, a new Horizon Europe (FP10) and a mix of bottom-up and top-down instruments. The proposal includes a restructuring of existing elements, including of health and research related funding.

BioMed Alliance (35 medical & research societies) and 18 other civil society organisations representing patients, ERNs, healthcare professionals and the wider health community call on policy makers to ensure that the next multiannual EU budget will be fit-for-purpose to address current and future health threats. They ask the Commission, the Council and the Parliament to ensure strong, ringfenced health funding in a dedicated cluster or window, and to ensure that patient needs will be met.

Importance of investing in health

Investment in health is key, as the COVID-19 pandemic with over 2 million deaths in the European area is still fresh in our memories, and new strains still showing up on a regular basis. There are a range of health challenges on the horizon including an increasing incidence of chronic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, population ageing and the emergence of pathogens with pandemic potential[1]. The European Union has taken important initial steps with the ambition of creating a European Health Union and establishing the EU4Health Programme, but these important elements are absent from plans for the future budget. This has the inherent risk that progress is undone, and that the resilience of our health system against current and future threats is jeopardised, eventually impacting the quality of care that patients receive.

Surveys among European citizens consistently show that they consider investing in health to be of high importance. A Eurobarometer survey from 2022 demonstrated that 70% of EU Citizens support a common EU health policy, and support has continued[2]. For instance, a recent survey of young Europeans from February 2025 found that public health was in a shared second place in the top 5 areas that the EU should address as a priority[3].

Besides being a priority to EU citizens, investing in health offers substantial return on investment. Studies in the UK found that for every £1 of public money invested in medical research, around 25 pence in health gains and GDP benefits is received back every year[4]. In Horizon Europe, each Euro

[1] See also the statement of BioMed and other civil society organisations from May 2025: https://www.biomedeurope.org/news/new-statement-health-is-well-policy-makers-must-preserve-investment-to-protect-the-health-of-eu-citizens/

[2] See: Standard Eurobarometer 97 Public opinion in the European Union Summer 2022, https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=83434

[3] See: FLASH EUROBAROMETER 556, February 2025, https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3373

[4] See Kings College: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/health-research-offers-a-big-return-on-investment

invested is expected to return up to EUR 11 in GDP gains by 2045, and investment in the health cluster led to 153 innovations in the period 2021-2024[5].

Recommendations for the next MFF

Do not let life-saving health funding disappear

Several signs point towards a worrying deprioritisation of health in EU policy and the next MFF: under the current proposal, EU4Health would not be continued but absorbed into a new European Competitiveness Fund (ECF). On top of that, health does not get its own cluster or window in the ECF and Horizon Europe, but it has to share a window with agriculture and bioeconomy. These different sectors face different challenges and priorities, and health requires its own window or cluster to reflect its strategic importance for Europe, including by the improvement of wellbeing, resilience of the workforce, innovation and resilience against health threats.

Securing a ringfenced budget for health is crucial for continuous investment in long-term public health goals and for supporting long-term strategic planning. Under the current MFF, the Horizon Europe budget has been cut by €2.1 billion in 2024 and the EU4Health program experienced a €1 billion budget cut, with funding diverted to competing priorities.

- → Due to the unique nature of the health domain, and the importance of investing in health for patient care and the wider economy, we call for the creation of a **standalone health window within the ECF and Horizon Europe.**
- → **The health budget must be ringfenced to enable strategic planning and enhance resilience** with the option to increase it in case of emerging health threats.

Advancing EU health is broader than just promoting competitiveness

The BioMed Alliance calls for a balanced approach between boosting competitiveness and enhancing health and wellbeing for European citizens. Under the current proposal, Horizon Europe will be closely connected to the ECF, and particularly the budget for pillar 2 which includes health. This would constitute a significant change compared to the current situation, and joint management might impact Horizon's unique characteristics and broad focus.

Europe needs a strong life-science sector to support innovation in research and healthcare, but enhancing competitiveness should not be our sole objective. EU health policy and funding should also focus on issues like public health, prevention, enhancing quality of care, addressing unmet medical needs, repurposing of medicines and improving equal access to health services, access to safe and effective medicinal products and medical devices and challenges to maintain the workforce.

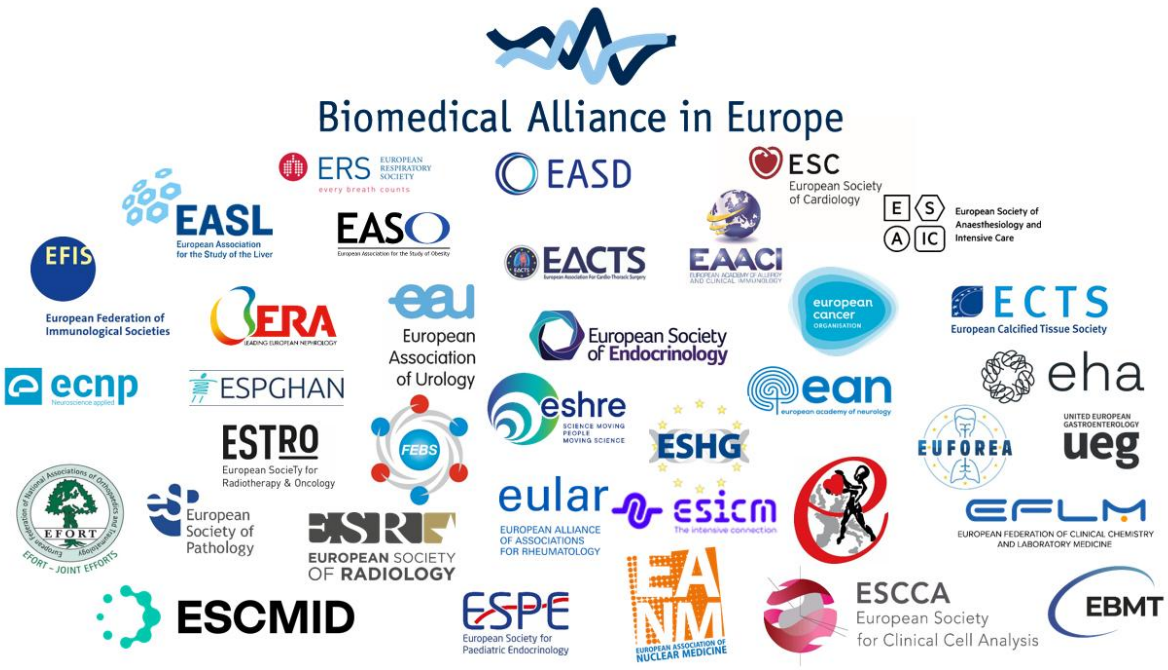
- → The European Commission should **look beyond competitiveness** in its health policies, policies and funding for unmet medical needs, and enhancing the safety and availability of health innovations must be pursued.
- → Horizon Europe is unique in facilitating cross-border research and must be maintained as a standalone programme. Any **links with the proposed European Competitiveness Fund must be**

[5] See European Commission: Interim Evaluation of the Horizon Europe 2021-2024: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025SC0110

clarified, and the next Framework Programme must maintain its unique character and its support for a broad range of priorities, some that may go beyond enhancing competitiveness (e.g. funding for prevention, unmet medical needs, equal access, treatment optimisation, repurposing, regulatory science, supporting academic clinical trials).

Provide strong support for EU civil society to ensure a variety of views are considered in policy making

The dissolution of EU4Health and the discontinuation of the operating grants also affect civil society in the health field, and the ability of policy makers to include the voices of all stakeholders in legislative procedures. Without operating grants, patient organisations and other civil society organisations may need to look for other sources of funding (potentially from industry) or reduce their activities and thus their impact at EU level. Either way, the stakeholder landscape at EU level may become less diverse, with the risk that the representatives of patients and healthcare professionals will be less vocal and that policy will be less adapted to their concrete needs.



BioMed Alliance and its members are joined by the following organisations:

Biomedical Alliance in Europe

WFIPP

eatris

ERN RARE-LIVER
European Reference Network on Hepatological Diseases

ERKNet
The European Rare Kidney Disease Reference Network

IKCC
International Kidney Cancer Coalition

European Reference Network
ERN eUROGEN
Rare Uro-Recto-Genital Diseases & Complex Conditions

European Reference Network

Endo-ERN
European Reference Network on Rare Endocrine Conditions

European Reference Network
for rare or low prevalence complex diseases
Network
Eye Diseases (ERN-EYE)

European Reference Network
for rare or low prevalence complex diseases
Network
Neuromuscular Diseases (ERN EURO-NMD)
Member
Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, Hôpital Pitié-Salpêtrière — France

European Reference Network
for rare or low prevalence complex diseases
Network
Genetic Tumour Risk Syndromes (ERN GENTURIS)

European Reference Network
for rare or low prevalence complex diseases
Network
Craniofacial anomalies and ear, nose and throat disorders (ERN CRANIO)