



Secure a strong MFF that puts the health of patients first

Ahead of discussions in the Council on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) this week, BioMed Alliance reiterates that fit-for-purpose and strong health funding are essential to preserve the well-being of EU citizens. With potential cuts on the agenda to the MFF as a whole, Horizon Europe, and health funding within the Competitiveness Fund, this is a critical moment to secure health funding and ensure support for European research and innovation. Without strong health and research funding, and sufficient coordination in the health field, Europe may no longer be able to facilitate the development of new treatments and insights into human health, improve health threat preparedness, and strengthen its competitiveness compared to global counterparts.

Background

Discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) are advancing, with EU leaders coming together on 15 and 16 October in the European Council to discuss the future EU budget from 2028-2034. Member States will likely discuss potential cuts to the budget compared to the Commission's proposal in July 2025¹, including reductions of the health and research budgets. A negotiation box prepared by the Irish Presidency includes proposed total cuts of around 141 billion in current prices of the overall MFF, representing an 8% cut of the original Commission proposal.

In addition, health and research funding would face even bigger reductions. A cut of 9.6% to Horizon Europe and 13% to the Health window in the Competitiveness Fund is also part of the proposed aspects to be discussed in the negotiations on the budget. In addition, there are several Member States including Germany, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Austria who propose cutting the budget even further. The result is that critical investment in European research, innovation and health is at risk.

Comparison between the Irish Presidency Negotiation Box and the European Commission proposal²

Topic	Commission proposal (2025 prices)	Irish Presidency proposal (2025 prices)	Change (€bn)	Change (%)
Total MFF	€1,763.1bn	€1,622.0bn	-€141.0bn	-8.0%
European Competitiveness Fund	€397.8bn	€355.9bn	-€41.8bn	-10.5%
Health, Biotechnology, Agriculture & Bioeconomy window	€20.0bn	€17.4bn	-€2.6bn	-13.0%
Horizon Europe	€154.9bn	€140.0bn	-€14.9bn	-9.6%

¹ See: Multiannual Financial Framework 17-07-2025, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework_en

² See: Council MFF Negotiation Box 10-10-2026, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13922-2026-INIT/en/pdf>



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Towards a future-proof MFF

Europe needs a strong Multiannual Financial Framework more than ever. Amidst global tensions, wars and reduced European competitiveness, strengthening cooperation is the only way forward. Leaders of the largest groups of the European Parliament (EPP, S&D, Renew and Greens/EFA) have already joined forces to criticise the Irish Presidency's proposal³ and its proposed cuts. The four parties that represent a majority of MEPs, argue that amidst increasing EU responsibilities, an increasing competitiveness gap and turbulent global circumstances, it is unjustifiable to lower the budget.

EU health regulators are being asked to deliver an expanding set of responsibilities, including implementation of the Medical Devices Regulations, the HTA Regulation, medicines shortages monitoring and preparedness measures, without a corresponding public commitment to proportionate long-term resource increases. Units across DG SANTE and the EMA are already lacking the resources and staff to implement the existing regulatory framework, and with new regulatory changes in preparation it will be difficult to support the health sector across the EU to ensure harmonised and impactful implementation. We can only create a stronger Europe that supports Member States and citizens if sufficient funds are foreseen in the next MFF.

At the same time, enhancing European competitiveness cannot be achieved at national level, but needs the scale of the European market in terms of supporting research and innovation and creating a supportive regulatory framework. There are multiple signals that the EU is falling behind compared to its global counterparts, with manufacturers moving production outside the EU, geopolitical challenges such as the United States 'Most Favoured Nation' policy and numbers of clinical trials that are dropping⁴. Europe cannot live up to its objectives to support innovation and improve competitiveness while cutting health and research investment.

Health funding saves and improves lives⁵

As BioMed Alliance and other stakeholders argued last year, investment in health is key⁵. The COVID-19 pandemic with over 2 million deaths in the European area is still fresh in our memories. 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 potential⁶. The European Union has taken important initial steps with the ambition of creating a European Health Union and establishing the EU4Health Programme, but these

³ See the Statement of the leaders of EPP, S&D, Renew Europe, Greens/EFA groups in the European Parliament on the revised version of the Negotiating Box for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework presented by the Irish Presidency from 12/10/2026: <https://extranet.greens-efa-service.eu/public/media/file/1/9350>

⁴ See EU Commission: The global share of commercial clinical trials in the European Economic Area has halved, from 22% in 2013 to 12% in 2023. During the same period, China's share tripled from 5% to 18% at https://health.ec.europa.eu/biotechnology/overview_en

⁵ Repeated messages from our joint statement from Strong health funding in MFF is essential for the wellbeing of EU citizens from 6 November 2025 <https://www.biomedeurope.org/news/biomed-alliance-and-18-other-civil-society-organisations-call-for-strong-health-funding-under-the-next-eu-multiannual-financial-framework/>

⁶ 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/>



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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 continued⁷. 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 priority⁸.

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 year⁹. In Horizon Europe, each Euro 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 2021-2024¹⁰.

Strengthening European coordination and cooperation

Strengthening the MFF and increasing health funding alone will not be enough to achieve Europe's health and innovation objectives. EU institutions and Member States must work together effectively and in a coordinated manner. The health field is complex, with responsibilities distributed across regions, states, and different institutions at national and European level. Furthermore, under the proposal for the next MFF, health will no longer have its own dedicated health programme, as is currently the case with EU4Health. Instead, it will have to share a window within the European Competitiveness Fund with Biotechnology, Agriculture and Bioeconomy, creating a risk that vital health investments will be sidelined by other priorities.

The health research sector is of strategic importance to enhance European competitiveness, strengthen resilience against health challenges and threats, and improve the health and well-being of European citizens. With resources spread across multiple levels and instruments, stronger coordination is needed to ensure that funding is assigned where it has the biggest impact, supports each step in the research and innovation cycle and ensures that unmet needs are addressed.

It is therefore essential to establish a health-specific coordination mechanism that can coordinate the distribution of funding, allow for strategic long-term planning, and to make sure funding has a concrete impact on achieving health priorities. Only through a stronger and more coordinated European approach can we maximise the positive impact of health research and create a resilient and competitive health sector that fulfils the needs of EU citizens.

⁷ See: Standard Eurobarometer 97 Public opinion in the European Union Summer 2022, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=83434>

⁸ See: FLASH EUROBAROMETER 556, February 2025, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3373>

⁹ See Kings College: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/health-research-offers-a-big-return-on-investment>

¹⁰ See European Commission: Interim Evaluation of the Horizon Europe 2021-2024: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025SC0110>