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From Preparedness to Competitiveness: What Role Does Health Play in the New European Policy Agenda?

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[This document is one of a series of discussion notes addressing fundamental questions about global health. Its purpose is to transfer scientific knowledge into the public conversation and the decision-making process. These documents are based on the best information available and may be updated as new information comes to light.]

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In a geopolitical context marked by the post-pandemic recovery, digital transformation and increasing global competition between regional blocs, the European Union faces the challenge of moving from a reactive to a strategic vision for the formulation of health policies, integrating **health as a key pillar of sustainable growth**. The term that ended in 2024 brought important advances such as the strengthening of the European Medicines Agency and the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, as well as greater cooperation in health crises. However, **challenges** remain, such as fragmentation in financing, unequal access to treatment and the sustainability of healthcare systems within the context of an aging population.

Investment in global health and the science that underpins it not only improves the well-being of the population and guarantees **fundamental rights** within and outside our region, but also strengthens **productivity** and **economic stability**. To strengthen these links, for the coming years this document proposes to **place health at the centre of the European political agenda** through a multilateral approach, promoting cooperation between countries, sectors and key actors. It underlines the importance of equity in access to health services and technologies, ensuring that all citizens and countries benefit from advances in health. It also promotes the vision of "**One Health**", recognizing the interconnection between human, animal and environmental health as a strategic axis to prevent future health crises and strengthen the resilience of the global system ●

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1. A New EU Legislative Term

"The EU must take a leading role in defending multilateralism, the principles of liberal democracy, human rights and the free market upon which it is founded."

More than 100 days have passed since the European Commission began its work in a new European Union (EU) term. This new cycle faces the fundamental challenge of **strengthening integration** to face the threats and challenges of an international context in full transformation, where the EU has to redefine its role as a global player. What are the implications for global health?

The COVID-19 pandemic had a decisive impact on the previous term and placed global health at the centre of the European political agenda, both at the inter-governmental level and in its global response. Since then, a succession of crises and threats have increased the number of priorities. It is important to identify where and how this key issue is placed on the political agenda of European institutions.

To answer these questions, this document begins by **reviewing the past EU term** with a specific focus on global health. The measures adopted then, initially designed as a response to the pandemic, deepened the European-dimension of health policies and raised the political profile of those aimed at tackling the successive crises that marked the past period, including the response to the climate crisis. It then identifies the **main challenges** currently faced by the EU, and the policy priorities with which the European Commission (EC) intends to address them, with a particular focus on how global health is integrated into them. Finally, a series of **recommendations** are proposed for the political agenda of this new EU term, based on a clear premise: **the EU must take a leading role in defending multilateralism, the principles of liberal democracy, human rights and the free market upon which it is founded**. This defence not only has to do with its role and influence in the world, rather it is **an existential issue for Europe as we know it today**

2. An Assessment of the Previous Term: the Response to a Succession of Crises[1]

"The union of the Member States and EU institutions brought added value to the response to successive global crises of the period. From the pandemic to the rise in food and energy prices resulting from the war in Ukraine to the climate emergency."

Shortly after taking office in 2019, the first College of Commissioners under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen had to face the management of **the COVID-19 pandemic**. This crisis revealed the severe vulnerability of many countries and regions of the world, including the EU itself, highlighting the impossibility of dealing with a global health crisis and its consequences from exclusively national approaches.

In response, the EU proposed **concrete actions** aimed at ensuring the vaccination of the population of the Member States and restoring economic and social life, which had been severely affected by the social distancing measures to protect the population from contagion while the vaccines were being developed. The **EU vaccine strategy** unified the procurement of vaccines from all states, with the EC negotiating the agreements with the pharmaceutical companies. By the end of 2021 it had signed contracts worth €71 billion, securing up to 4.6 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines.[2,3] Subsequently, measures such as the creation of the EU Digital COVID Certificate allowed travel and free movement of people within the EU space to resume, helping to boost economic activity and moving closer to normality. To support the economic and social recovery of the EU and its Member States following the pandemic, the **Next Generation EU** Plan was launched: an unprecedented resource mobilization of over €800 billion (at current prices) for a green, digital and resilient transformation of Europe.

The health emergency tested the response capacity of European and national institutions and led to an expansion of EC competencies in public health. This gave a decisive impetus to the **European Health Union**, a strategic initiative to strengthen cooperation in public health.[4] From this framework, the response to the main identified challenges was proposed: improving the preparedness, response and resilience of health systems to crises; ensuring supply, access and affordable prices of essential medicines in the internal market; preventing and treating cancer with the launch of the European Plan to Combat Cancer; and creating a European health data space from the exploration of digital health opportunities. To strengthen the EU's institutional capacity, the mandates of the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control were reinforced, and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) was created. To fund these initiatives EU4Health was created, the EU's largest health funding program to date, with €5.3 billion.

The response to the pandemic also had a strong global dimension from the outset, which subsequently had a decisive influence on the EU's development cooperation policy and its role as an international actor. **The "*Team Europe*" approach** was set up to coordinate the global response to the pandemic and its economic and social consequences in lower-income partner countries. More than €53 billion were mobilized from EU institutions and Member States.[5] Since then, the initiatives developed under this approach shape the EU's development cooperation

[1] A detailed analysis of the balance of the previous term on global health https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/las-elecciones-europeas-en-clave-de-ka9kf/?trk=public_post&originalSubdomain=es

[2] These doses are more than 5 times higher than those needed to apply the full guideline to the entire EU population (448 million).

[3] https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/covid19-vaccines-19-2022/en/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

[4] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2024. The European Health Union: acting together for people's health. https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6e26bad9-5722-4c95-8bc5-4c21d8e370dd_en?filename=policy_com-2024-206_en.pdf.

[5] European Commission. EU Global Response to COVID-19. *International Partnerships - Human Development*. [Internet]. 2020. Available at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/human-development/eu-global-response-covid-19_en.

projects and the projects of the *Global Gateway* strategy.[6]

EU Global Health Strategy

In 2022 the EC updated the EU's vision on global health in place since 2010.[5] The "EU Global Health Strategy: better health for all in a changing world" was endorsed by the Council in 2024.[7] With this strategy, the EU puts forward a joint response (from EU institutions and Member States) to three major challenges of the global health agenda: driving the achievement of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, from a "One Health" perspective;[8] strengthening global health security; and committing to the transformation of the international global health system, its governance and financing. It is an ambitious proposal, with a vocation for international leadership, to maximize the EU's contributions to global health through the consolidation of the European Health Union, health sector assistance programs to partner countries and participation with a single voice in decision-making forums within the system.

Multiple public policy areas converge and interrelate in the strategy, including foreign policy and development cooperation, public health policy and science, research and innovation. Effective coordination between these policy areas and adequate and sufficient funding are the main challenges identified by ISGlobal in its analysis of the opportunities and challenges of this strategy. While the strategy underlines global health as a key priority on the EU policy agenda, it also highlights some risks and worrying trends:

- **In the field of foreign policy and development cooperation**, the global health strategy is part of the *Global Gateway*. This initiative aims to define the role of the EU as a global player through its partnerships with third countries where it can invest in strategic sectors, systems and infrastructures, one of its pillars being health. This approach does not place development cooperation objectives at the centre, but utilises the same instruments and initiatives that are used to implement cooperation projects, such as the "Team Europe Initiatives". Among the distortions that this can cause is the excessive focus on the role of the private sector and the reduced participation and influence of civil society organizations in programs and projects. In addition, in recent years, organizations in the field of cooperation have denounced the reduction of EU funds earmarked for projects aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in poorer partner countries.[10] The EU is joining the worrying trend of stagnation and reduction of Official Development Assistance that can be observed among the main donors.[11]

- **In the case of research and innovation policies**, health is one of the six clusters of the EU framework program, *Horizon Europe*, with a total budget for the period 2021-2027 of more than €95 billion.[12] Here, the concern lies with connecting all EU interventions and funding to prioritized objectives, such as competitiveness or greater strategic autonomy. In science, research, development and innovation, this cannot be the exclusive orientation. Global health as a discipline has a vocation for equity that can be neglected from this perspective.

[6] See the analyses on Global Gateway carried out in recent years by the Elcano Royal Institute: A Common Future for Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (April, 2024). Global Gateway: what is there to know and what does it mean for Latin America and the Caribbean (December, 2023); Development aid and geopolitics: the EU's Global Gateway initiative (July, 2023).

[7] Council of the European Union. EU Global Health Strategy: Council adopts conclusions. *Council of the EU - Press releases*. 29 January 2024. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/press/press-releases/2024/01/29/eu-global-health-strategy-council-approves-conclusions/.

[8] The "One Health" concept is defined as "the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines (medical, veterinary, research, etc.) working locally, nationally and globally to achieve optimal health for people, animals and our environment https://www.isglobal.org/en/-/one-health-una-sola-salud-?utm.

[9] ISGlobal. Opportunities and challenges of the EU Global Health Strategy. *Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal)*. 2023. Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/-/oportunidades-desafios-estrategia-salud-global-ue.

[10] Director's blog: Do partner country interests matter to the EU anymore? - CONCORD. 2024. Available at: https://concordeurope.org/2024/10/29/directors-blog-do-partner-country-interests-matter-to-the-eu-anymore/.

[11] Devex. Scoop: The EU aid cuts revealed. 2024. Available at: https://www.devex.com/news/scoop-the-eu-aid-cuts-revealed-108390.

[12] Council of the European Union. Council adopts position on €95.5 billion EU research programme for 2021-2027. 2021. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/press/press-releases/2021/03/16/council-adopts-position-on-955-billion-eu-research-programme-for-2021-2027/.

The European Green Deal

The adoption of the "One Health" approach in the EU Global Health Strategy, as well as the health impact of environmental determinants, intrinsically links global health with the European Green Deal, one of the political priorities identified by the first von der Leyen Commission even before COVID-19. It set out a roadmap for articulating concrete objectives in the fight against the climate crisis. The starting point was a transformation of the economy based on technological innovation and sustainability, with the aim of meeting international climate commitments in a socially just manner. Reducing emissions, improving air quality and regulating synthetic chemicals have been key elements of this strategy, with measures such as the Zero Pollution Action Plan, which seek to minimize environmental health risks. However, the implementation of the Green Deal has faced significant obstacles in the last phase of the term, with difficulties in passing certain regulations, such as the Nature Restoration Law[13] and the pesticide reduction framework,[14] due to political resistance and sectoral pressures. All this has reduced the ambition of regulations such as the Air Quality Directive,[15,16] anticipating one of the great challenges that Member States will have to face in the coming years.

The 2019-2024 European term offers an unequivocal balance: **the union of the Member States and EU institutions brought added value to the response to successive global crises** of the period. From the pandemic to the rise in food and energy prices resulting from the war in Ukraine to the climate emergency. Better integration and greater ambition of the initiatives reviewed should be the backbone of the political agenda of the ongoing term ●

[13] Euronews Green. What is the Wilderness Restoration Act and what does its passage imply? 2024. Available at: https://es.euronews.com/green/2024/06/18/que-es-la-ley-de-restauracion-de-la-naturaleza-y-que-implica-su-aprobacion.

[14] European Parliament. Parliament fails to achieve a majority for pesticide reduction legislation. 2023. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/es/press-room/20231117IPR12215/no-majority-in-parliament-for-legislation-to-curb-use-of-pesticides.

[15] García-Vaz C and Bernal A. How Can the EU Move Towards Clean Air? The Need for a Bold Step Forward. Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). Policy Brief No. 53. October 2023. Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/-/ue-avanzar-hacia-aire-limpio-medidas.

[16] García-Vaz C, Rocamora A, Daher C et al. The economic fallacy of improving air quality in Europe: the social and economic costs of inaction are far greater than taking ambitious action. Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). Series: Health and Environment, No. 57. February 2024.
Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/-/improving-air-quality-in-europe-costs-inaction.

3. Challenges of the New European Term

"The European Commission has defined seven priorities to drive a transformation to ensure the region's strategic autonomy and redefinition as a global player."

The results of the 2024 European Parliament elections increased the presence and influence of parties opposed to the European integration process. The EU institution, democratically elected by the citizens of the EU, is not immune to the rise of ideologies contrary to the principles on which it is founded. These ideologies have been gaining weight for years in decision-making spaces around the world. The agreement between the EPP, Socialists & Democrats and Renew Europe groups has made possible a new college of commissioners under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen. However, the political balance in the European Parliament faces further polarization. For example, the implementation of the European Green Deal faces added difficulties due to the growing influence of extreme right-wing parties (also in the governments of the Member States), which have put this initiative at the centre of their attacks.[17]

Table 1. The role of civil society in the definition of public policies in the EU

The EU institutions have a strong commitment to the participation of civil society in the definition of EU public policies. To this end, a critical element is the provision of funds for different programs and financial instruments. For months, several organizations have been expressing concern about the limitation or elimination of these fundamental channels for the participation of civil society in the political process, as has occurred with the LIFE Program dedicated to the environment and climate action.[18] With all this, the EU is joining the global trend of restricting civic space around the world, and detracting from the democratic quality of its public policies by also limiting the options to inform them with the best available scientific evidence.[19]

Added to this is the disruption of the geopolitical chessboard and international relations brought about by the new United States (US) administration since January 2025. Since then, a new stage has been entered in EU-US relations. Tariff measures and, above all, the Trump administration's new position on the conflict in Ukraine have accelerated the urgent adoption of measures in two directions. On the one hand, to achieve and guarantee the EU's strategic autonomy in critical areas and, on the other hand, to deepen the common defence and security policy that allows maintaining the common position of support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression, despite the change of US geopolitical course. In the area of global health, the US withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), the financial and political punishment of other multilateral institutions and the frontal attack on global consensus such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are aimed at undermining spaces and instruments of multilateral cooperation. The aspiration to

[17] Weise Z, Camut N. Let's kill the Green Deal together, far-right leader urges EU's conservatives. POLITICO. 2025. Disponible en: https://www.politico.eu/article/lets-kill-eu-green-deal-together-france-far-right-leader-tells-center-right-jordan-bardella/.

[18] Joint letter to EU Commission President on enabling civil society engagement to strengthen democracy and support the European project. Health and Environment Alliance. 2024. Disponible en: https://www.env-health.org/joint-letter-to-eu-commission-president-on-enabling-civil-society-engagement-to-strengthen-democracy-and-support-the-european-project/.

[19] Director's Blog. 2023: A bad year for civic space in the EU. What does this mean for 2024, the European Elections and institutional renewal? CONCORD. 2023. Available at: https://concordeurope.org/2023/12/15/2023-a-bad-year-for-civic-space-in-the-eu-what-does-this-mean-for-2024-the-european-elections-and-institutional-renewal/.

leadership embodied in the Global Health Strategy requires a forceful response in defence of these institutions and consensuses. Something similar can be expected of the EU in the face of the dismantling of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the consequences of which are difficult to quantify today and have a direct impact on programs and initiatives that are fundamental health sector financing.[20] Finally, the EU must play an active advocacy role, both internally and externally, **for women's equality**, the full recognition of their rights and their realization. Organizations working for the defence and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, particularly of women and girls, face threats that can lead to economic suffocation and the criminalization of their activities.

Priorities of the European Commission from a global health perspective

Against this backdrop of accumulating challenges both internally and externally, the European Commission has defined seven priorities to drive a transformation to ensure the region's strategic autonomy and redefinition as a global player. **Policies directly related to global health are directly integrated into several of the objectives**.

- **The plan for sustainable prosperity and** forma parte de la Brújula de la Competitividad,[21] published in January 2025. A roadmap to strengthen the strategic autonomy and capacity of EU industries to compete in critical sectors, including health and climate. For example, progress towards the targets set in the European Green Deal with the European Climate Act setting a 90% emissions reduction target by 2040; or completing the European Health Union and reducing reliance on concentrated drug supply chains through a Critical Medicines Act. This plan also places research and innovation at the heart of the economy, providing for an increase in research spending to focus on strategic priorities, anticipating the development of a European Strategy for Life Sciences.

- **The new era for European defence and security**, which will have a special program outside the European budget to finance actions in the field of security and defence: the ReArming Europe / Preparedness 2030 Plan (hereinafter, ReArming Europe). This priority includes the improvement of preparedness and crisis management with the publication of a Union Preparedness Strategy[22] for crises caused by threats of all kinds, in particular threats to public health. In another priority area, among the objectives that seek to maintain the quality of life in the region, the development of a European Plan for climate change adaptation and preparedness is foreseen. It is likely that the logic and narratives of security will permeate many of the EU's strategic interventions.

- **In foreign policy, the priority is to make the most of partnerships with third countries**. The European Commission takes the lead in defending and promoting a rules-based international order and strengthening the global institutions that need to be reformed. The objectives include the establishment of a new external economic policy that deepens and takes "to a higher dimension" the *Global Gateway* approach. This aims to mobilize resources to invest in critical infrastructure and systems (including health systems or vaccine and drug production systems) in partner countries.

The implementation of these priorities, which is only just beginning, will be the true measure of the Commission's commitment, which will face challenges in the political, budgetary and administrative spheres.

[20] Fanjul G, Bassat Q. Donald Trump is a threat to your health. El País. 2025. Available at: https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2025-01-27/donald-trump-es-una-amenaza-para-su-salud.html.

[21] European Commission. Competitiveness. 2024. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/competitiveness_es. This document is based on the recommendations of two reports commissioned respectively by the European Council to Enrico Letta on the future of the European common market; and the European Commission to Mario Draghi on the future of European competitiveness.

[22] European Commission (Representation in Spain). Union Preparedness Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Emerging Threats and Crises. Available at: https://spain.representation.ec.europa.eu/noticias-eventos/noticias-0/estrategia-de-preparacion-de-la-union-para-prevenir-amenazas-y-crisis-emergentes-y-reaccionar-frente-2025-03-26_es.

In the political sphere, as already noted, the influence in the European Parliament of extreme right-wing parties that oppose the very process of European integration and for whom the deepening of health issues poses an encroachment on national competences stands out.[23] For example, a clash is foreseen in the reform of the Health Emergency Response and Preparedness Authority (HERA), for which a greater regulatory role is envisaged.

The second challenge is **budgetary** and manifests itself at several levels. Firstly, the economic effort of the Rearmament Europe Plan, announced at the beginning of March, provides for the mobilization of €800 billion in defence, an amount that will require a readjustment of investments in other EU policies. Secondly, the next Multiannual Financial Framework, whose drafting process was launched in February, must adequately support these priorities with sufficient resources and more agile and flexible instruments that will come into force in 2028, the last year of the current Commission's term of office. Until then, these priorities will have to be financed with the resources, instruments and programs of the current framework. Third, the annual plans and calls for existing instruments and programs do not always reflect the defined priorities nor encourage policy and instrument interactions. For example, in the 2025 Horizon Europe Program call for grants, the budget for health research, amounting to €970 million, does not earmark funds for research on the health effects of climate change.[24]

The third challenge has to do with the **interaction of different policy areas and thematic priorities**. The implementation gap between the objectives pursued and their achievement is one of the main shortcomings of European public policies,[25] especially those that bring together different areas and must break down thematic niches. An additional element to be taken into account in this regard is the EC's stated desire to reduce bureaucracy and simplify administrative procedures. While this is potentially beneficial for interactions with the EU institutions, it is a profound transformation that cannot undermine the guarantees of political processes, the participation of civil society in them, or lower the requirements of regulatory compliance and accountability.

At a time when the definition of the EU's international role is a priority and an existential issue for the region, the commitment to development cooperation must be reaffirmed as one of the pillars of the European strategy. During the previous term, an evolution of this policy was proposed: from a traditional perspective of aid from donor countries to recipients, to the establishment of international partnerships (in fact, this is how the EC's Directorate-General responsible for this policy was re-named) of a more egalitarian nature with lower-income countries. The *Global Gateway* strategy furthered this evolution by proposing strategic investments that go beyond the scope of development cooperation and its traditional actors as the linchpins of these partnerships. The way in which the EC sets out its foreign policy priorities for the current term and its proposal for an external economic policy reflect this same perspective. However, it is urgent for the EC to consider how it will ensure that this evolution does not disregard the principles and international commitments to the development of the poorest countries, which depend on it for essential aspects, such as the maintenance of their health systems. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is being severely cut by major donors, including the EU itself, which must reverse this situation immediately if it is to lead the commitment to sustainability and multilateralism in addressing global challenges. It is essential that the EU proves to be a reliable partner for lower income countries where the impact of USAID dismantling is expected to be catastrophic even if, at the time of writing, it is difficult to quantify ●

[23] PeseckytėG. With Europe facing right turn, how will public health be affected? POLITICO. 2024 Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-is-facing-a-swing-to-the-right-what-will-this-mean-for-public-health/.

[24] ISGlobal. SPHERA consortium denounces lack of European funding for climate change and health research. 2024. Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/en/-/sphera-denuncia-la-falta-de-financiacion-en-clima-y-salud.

[25] Skordis J, Froeschl G, Baldi SL, Berner-Rodoreda A, Casamitjana N, Cobelens F, et al. The EU global health strategy: from policy to implementation. Global Health Research and Policy. 2025. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256-025-00410-4.

4. Recommendations

"The EU must concretely translate the aspiration of international leadership outlined in the Global Health Strategy and embed this vision in all related policies."

The European Commission has established political priorities supported by a large parliamentary majority. This strengthens the integration process and enables the European institutions to face the uncertain international context with a defence of multilateralism and the system of rules. Global health is an area where these aspirations converge, the achievement of which would benefit from the following measures:

1

The EU and its Member States must exercise **international leadership in the defence of multilateralism**, rules-based international order, provision of global public goods and compliance with international commitments on development cooperation and global health. Specifically:

- In the process of developing the next Multiannual Financial Framework and its instruments, the specific nature of ODA and its objectives of fighting poverty and inequality in the EU's lower-income partner countries should be maintained and reinforced.
- In the next annual action plans of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) the EC must maintain an ODA volume that comes close to meeting the international commitment of 0.7% of the region's Gross National Income.
- In the different international spaces and forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly or the IV International Conference on Financing for Development, the EC and the EU Member States must be fully aligned in the defence of sustainable development and the worldwide achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, actively promoting the mobilization of all kinds of necessary resources.
- To be consistent with the principles on which it wants to base this international leadership, the EU must guarantee funding windows in its various programs and instruments so that civil society can participate meaningfully in the elaboration and implementation of EU public policies.

2

In the field of global health, the EU must concretely translate the aspiration of international leadership outlined in the Global Health Strategy and embed this vision in all related policies. This implies:

- The EU must develop effective coordination mechanisms between the EU institutions and the Member States to enable them to speak with one voice in international fora.
- Although it has no formal membership, the EU must reinforce WHO's legitimacy at the centre of global health governance by ensuring its financial independence through increased voluntary contributions from Member States.
- In international negotiations, the EU must defend equity in global health as a fundamental principle guiding its positions. As far as the so-called pandemic agreement is concerned, this means opting for an ambitious and binding text that strengthens multilateral coordination on the basis of equity, transparency and shared interests.
- The EU should promote the implementation of the III Gender Action Plan in foreign policy, promoting the defence of the rights and health of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health, with financial support to the United Nations Population Fund.
- In partnerships with lower-income countries, progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda targets should be placed at the centre of interventions. At the multilateral level, partnerships with high-impact multilateral initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI)

and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria should be strengthened, guaranteeing them financial support in the next replenishments enabling them to achieve their goals.

- Align the priorities and mainstream the principles of the Global Health strategy in the annual plans and calls for EU instruments and programs (NDICI, EU4Health, Horizon Europe, EDCTP[26]) in order to have sufficient resources for its implementation.

3

Health is an essential component for the competitiveness, strategic autonomy and security of the EU. This **connection with the priorities of the term** must advance in the consolidation of the European Health Union from a perspective of equity. To this end:

- Preparedness and response capabilities for all types of emergencies and crises must be enhanced: by strengthening HERA's autonomy and authority, and placing it at the core of the governance of the Union's Preparedness Plan; and by boosting its role in preparedness for all types of risks and hazards.
- It is imperative to ensure that the *all-hazards* approach mentioned in the Union's Preparedness Strategy covers any health risk, including natural, climatic, biochemical, nuclear and socio-economic risks, in addition to those related to conflicts.
- To enhance the preventive approach of health systems by addressing the multiple determinants of people's health, promoting "health in all policies" and making technology an enabler for the protection and realization of the right to health of EU citizens.
- Ensure that the Critical Medicines Act reinforces equitable access to essential antibiotics through specific incentives for EU production, public procurement criteria that prioritize diversification and sustainability of the supply chain, and funding mechanisms that encourage innovation in new antimicrobials.
- Advocate for a culture of preparedness[27] and develop messages through different channels and media to improve communication with citizens on EU policy initiatives and actions in the field of health.

4

The EC policy agenda for the term proposes to place **research and innovation** at the centre of the EU's economic and competitiveness model, with concrete commitments to budget increases that should foster a sustainable research ecosystem. This implies:

- An increase in the budget allocated to the successor of Horizon Europe (Framework Program 9) within the next Multiannual Financial Framework, in line with the demands of the European academic associations.[28,29] The availability of resources for basic science will be guaranteed, which broadens the horizon of possibilities for scientific and technological development without being directly connected to immediate objectives.
- The instruments and annual calls of the Horizon Europe Program and the Framework Program 9 should adequately reflect the principles and interactions of programs and strategies such as the Global Health Program or the LIFE Environment and Climate Action Program. Thus, promoting the transversality of knowledge generation and transfer in all EU programs and public policies.
- Ensure that the European Strategy for Life Sciences places a priority focus on health, equity and knowledge transfer both within the European area and outside the region to generate the greatest possible impact on people's health.
- Defend the centrality of scientific evidence as the basis for informing

[26] European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). Official website [Internet]. Available at: https://www.edctp.org/.

[27] Marín-Carballo C, Diago-Navarro E and García-Vaz C. Extreme Weather Events: How Do We Prepare for an Increasingly Hostile Climate? Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). Series: All-Hazards Preparedness and Response, No. 62. December 2024. Available at: https://www.isglobal.org/en/-/fenomenos-meteorologicos-extremos-como-nos-preparamos-para-un-clima-cada-vez-mas-hostil

[28] 24 leading universities pushing the frontiers of innovative research. LERU. 2025. Available at: https://www.leru.org/files/Publications/Double-investment-in-research-innovation-and-education.pdf

[29] EU-Life. Scientific research is a strategic necessity for resilience and competitiveness in Europe. 2025. Available at: https://eu-life.eu/sites/default/files/2025-03/EULIFE_STATEMENT_RESILIENCE_COMPETITIVENESS_19_03_2025_0.pdf.

public policy making in the EU, taking care in the dissemination of messages and combating the dissemination of false, biased or biased news or news that questions scientific work.

5

Ensure coherence between health and ecological transition by reinforcing comprehensive approaches such as *"One Health"* or Planetary Health in the implementation of the *European Green Deal*. To this end:

- It is imperative to raise the level of ambition of the region's climate targets in the European Climate Act and to reaffirm this commitment to policies, programs, budgets and strategies aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change, with special attention to the announced goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 90% by 2040.
- The EC should incorporate health as a cross-cutting element of the European Climate Change Adaptation Plan and provide it with the necessary resources for its implementation through different EU funding instruments and programs.
- The EC must ensure that the new Air Quality Directive is implemented as soon as possible and to the greatest extent possible to not only reduce the high health burden and health costs related to air pollution, but also to increase productivity and economic competitiveness.
- The EU as a whole should improve current urban planning and transport practices, as they have a significant impact on health, and increase, for example, the availability of green spaces to reduce the high burden of mental health problems and cardiovascular problems.[30]
- Continue the implementation of the *"One Health"* approach in the area of antimicrobial resistance and emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases and promote environmental integrity, biodiversity and pesticide and fertilizer reduction in the upcoming reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

[30] Nieuwenhuijsen MJ. Urban and transport planning pathways to carbon neutral, liveable and healthy cities: a review of the current evidence. *The Lancet Planetary Health*. 2019;3(9):e397-410. Available at: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(19).

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• **García-Vaz, C. and Bernal, A. (2023)**. *How Can the EU Move Towards Clean Air? The Need for a Bold Step Forward*. Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), Policy Brief n.º 53. This document analyzes how air quality policies in the EU can become a key opportunity to advance public health and sustainability, within the framework of the European Green Deal. https://www.isglobal.org/documents/10179/12351497/53_ISGlobal+Clean+AIr+UE+EN.

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https://www.isglobal.org/en/-/papel-salud-en-nueva-agenda-politica-europea-

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