



Statement by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) on the proposal for the next EU budget 2021-2027

Investing in people means investing in health

Tuesday, 15 May 2018

On May 2nd, 2018, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, presented the proposal for the post-2020 European Union (EU) budget. Here we set out EUPHA's response to the public consultation, submitted on 22 February 2018.

We believe that European funding for (public) health remains as important as ever and are convinced that it has significant added value. Reflecting on the published proposal, we are pleased to see that the Health Programme will at least be partially continued, even if we are disappointed that the word 'health' is almost absent throughout the budget proposal.

In an earlier draft of the budget, it was suggested that the Health Programme would fall under the single market cluster and would be hidden away in a cluster 'food safety; human, plant and animal health'. This attracted strong opposition from the public health sector, given the obvious scope for conflicts of interests with the food, pharmaceutical and digital industries. We are pleased to see that the final budget proposal, appropriately, includes the Health Programme under the 'investing in people' cluster.

We are also pleased to see a generous research and innovation cluster in the budget proposal. This could potentially fund research on health systems, health promotion and other public health studies. And in the Digital Europe Programme, health care is listed as one of the areas in which 'digital transformation' can bring benefits to society. Car safety is explicitly listed as one of the opportunities arising from digital transformation, of great importance for public health as road injuries are still a major contributor to avoidable mortality and morbidity.

We are, however, very disappointed that health is not specifically mentioned in the research and innovation cluster – apart from two specific public health related examples of past achievements of EU funding i.e. making available of Ebola vaccines and advancements in cancer treatments. The failure to mention health specifically means that there is no guarantee as to what extent the research and innovation cluster will prioritise health.

We also notice that the budget for the health programme has decreased both in absolute and proportional terms. The current EU budget (2014-2020) includes less than 0.05% of the total budget on the Health Programme (approximately €449 million in monetary terms). In the proposal for the next budget €413 million euro is set aside for health, which is even less, at 0.03% on health.

The limited mention of (public) health and the small budget for public health is worrisome. The absence of health in the programme of the post-2020 budget proposal poses a risk to continuing efforts against common challenges in the area of public health that no single country can tackle

alone. Through collaboration, public health issues that occur EU-wide can be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

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The [recent Eurobarometer](#), published in April 2018, concludes that having good health is considered as the most essential factor for getting ahead in life, endorsed by almost half of respondents (48%). The determinants of health range from individual lifestyle factors to general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions. This range of determinants can only be tackled through a multidisciplinary approach, which is made possible by highlighting health within the 'investing in people' cluster.

EUPHA calls for an EU that prioritises health. Health needs to be visible in the budget and programmes. We need a dedicated position pushing for health in all policies, someone that is not limited by other priorities, for example a [Commission Vice-President for Health](#).

The biggest public health challenges the coming decade will be, according to our [EUPHA member questionnaire](#): For youth, the threats to public health most often mentioned are obesity and overweight, mental health, drug abuse, and (other) lifestyle behaviours, including physical inactivity. In adults, the public health threat most often listed is non-communicable diseases (NCDs). For the elderly, social isolation and access to health services are deemed most threatening. The questionnaire includes responses from all EU countries, so these public health challenges need to be tackled EU-wide.

EUPHA calls for an EU that invests in health. Investment is needed in the public health challenges that Europe will face in the coming decade, such as the NCD epidemic. In the current budget proposal these threats to public health are not made clear, at best, hidden away in the proposal. Action needs to be taken on these crucial health issues. Investing in health should be seen as an investment in a healthier workforce, and ultimately, should be seen as an investment in economic growth.

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The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations in Europe. Our network of national associations of public health represents around 20'000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.

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