

## Joint statement

# EU budget for health, cohesion, and research faces cuts to fund strategic technologies, defence and security at its borders

**European social civil society and public health organisations question whether the reduced EU funding will deliver on the health and social rights political priorities of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 as permacrisis continues.**

2 February 2024

Europe continues to suffer from converging crises, striving to overcome the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, while addressing the consequences of ongoing global conflicts and climate change.

Deprivation and inequalities have persisted for many years with approximately [one in five people across the EU living in poverty or social exclusion](#) (including a [quarter of all children](#)). Inadequate social protection schemes, low and unstable income, and discrimination of minorities such as [Roma](#) are now further exacerbated by high inflation, food and energy costs. EU funding meant to address those long-standing challenge faces increasing pressure, depending on vast and quickly changing geopolitical priorities.

Following the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, heads of states and governments yesterday agreed to redeploy funds from key EU programmes in order to divert them to support strategic technologies, defence and security at EU borders, and Ukraine's recovery. The decision resulted in a 20% cut of the EU4Health programme, Cohesion funds and HorizonEurope – funding programmes that support social and health priorities, and research.

In 2021, at the [Porto Social Summit](#), the EU institutions, social partners, and civil society set three targets for a Social Europe by 2030. At [the coming La Hulpe Social Summit](#), an interinstitutional declaration for a stronger social dimension of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 will be adopted. **We, European social civil society and public health organisations, question whether these commitments can indeed be met while MFF funding for health and social priorities is being reduced.**

**While it is undeniable that Ukraine deserves extensive support, the redeployment of funds initially designated for health, social cohesion, and research creates problems elsewhere and risks dispersing resources.** Communities, civil society organisations and

social service providers across the EU have shown great solidarity towards Ukraine and we must ensure sufficient funding to support its citizens hosted in the EU, whilst also supporting Ukraine's recovery. This should be the time to top up funds for social cohesion and reducing disparities, also to avoid future cliff-edge scenarios.

The welcome provided for displaced Ukrainians should be the blueprint for all persons seeking protection in the EU. Yet, the migration priorities are misplaced, with funding instead redeployed towards border management. Furthermore, the readiness of Member States to cut allocations from budgets dedicated to health and social objectives raises concerns for the future, especially as the European Commission prepares to draft the next seven-year EU budget, due to start in 2028.

Reducing regional inequalities, strengthening human and community capital, and investing in skills, social and health-promoting infrastructure should not be a matter of left or right politics, big or small governments. Instead, it is the only way to achieve Europe's ambition for people-centered recovery and resilience building, and an economy focused on wellbeing of the people, communities, and planet.

**While continuing strategic support for Ukraine's recovery, addressing crises and natural disasters, we – European social civil society and public health organisations - ask the heads of states and governments driving this agenda to seriously consider backing up the targets and actions for a strong, fair and resilient Healthy and Social Europe with adequate funding.**

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### About EuroHealthNet

[EuroHealthNet](#) is a not-for-profit partnership of organisations, agencies and statutory bodies working on public health, disease prevention, promoting health, and reducing inequalities.

### About the Social Platform

Social Platform is the largest, leading organisation working on social issues. We have strength in numbers and put power back into people's hands who want a more Social Europe.



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