



Feedback from:

EuroHealthNet

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Initiative

[Multiannual Financial Framework – European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#)

EuroHealthNet welcomes the initiative on the establishment of the new European Social Fund+, guided by the Social Pillar. The wider social determinants – the conditions in which we born, grow, live and work – play a crucial role for people’s health and well-being. Health is highly valued among EU citizens; therefore, it is important to reduce unjust and avoidable health inequalities experienced within and between EU MS. Investing in people and their well-being, across the social gradient and life course, quality and integrated systems that promote health and prevent diseases offers multiple benefits.

Under the right conditions, the ESF+ can lead coherent address of key social determinants of health and a more preventative health systems framework. This success rests on key factors:

► Address inequalities by focusing on social gradients: The proposal to merge several funds into one tool promises to amplify the impact of ‘investing in people and social cohesion’, with support for implementation of the Social Pillar and the European Semester. It is encouraging to see the ESF+ prioritising equal opportunities for all, tackling discrimination and addressing inequalities, including in health long-term and community-based services. Focus should not only be on vulnerability but extend to level up the socio-economic gradient.

► Leverage resources needed for the future of good health but clarify details on principles, methodology and transparency in partnerships: From a “health in all policies” approach, the ESF+ rightly recognises added value of EU cooperation on health and social policies for addressing health determinants, building synergies with other sectors and complimentary EU Programmes. Investing in people’s health constitutes an important pre-condition for advancing economic and social resilience and upward social convergence. Integrated, sustainable multisectoral actions can unlock additional opportunities for multiple gains, but transparent evidence across communities is vital. To this end, combining it with ERDF/CF and other relevant funds needs to be enabled.


► Propose concrete governance structures for new EaSI and Health strands: Public health interventions proposed lack details and concretisation necessary to assess potential impact. It is yet to be seen what adequate governance structure is there to ensure strategic guidelines and technical assistance - in terms of human and financial resources, as well as coordination and leadership. While annual investment overall may remain stable, both strands face real cuts (6-8% [1]) putting into question their tangible and timely impact.[2] Adequate, realistic levels of funding, balanced by reducing outdated funding of health-harmful measures, will be needed.

► Clarify what scope the ESF+ will give to supporting integrated work and implementation of good practices in areas of more preventative, structural, systemic and social innovations in public health: The ESF+ intention to “mainstream effective preventative models... and solutions to contribute to innovative, efficient and sustainable health systems” is welcome. However, clearer assessments of how those solutions would reduce health and social inequalities, and go beyond individual approaches, are crucial. A recent systematic review of public health return on investment to health systems and societies demonstrates that public health interventions are highly cost-saving (14.3 to 1[3]), by focusing on health promotion and prevention, wider determinants of health and change to legislative environments.

► Align ESF+ Performance Indicators with the Social Scoreboard, strongly linked to the EU Semester: The Scoreboard’s areas of equal opportunities, social protection and inclusion are crucial, especially related to living conditions and poverty (incl. in-work), early childhood development health and care (incl. promotion and prevention), and public policy impacts on reducing poverty and inequalities (incl. health).

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