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Investing in Health Equity in the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034

As the EU prepares its **next Multiannual Financial Framework** (MFF) for 2028–2034, Europe faces a convergence of pressures—environmental degradation, economic insecurity, and demographic shifts. These overlapping challenges expose deep-rooted, pervasive social and geographical inequalities in health outcomes and access to the conditions for healthy lives for all.

While welcoming the European Commission's intention to align the next MFF more closely with strategic policy priorities, including social cohesion, territorial fairness, and the green and digital transitions—as outlined in the Commission's Roadmap—EuroHealthNet calls on the European Commission and the relevant negotiating stakeholders to position **health equity as a strategic investment priority** built into the structure of the next MFF, its EU programmes, and funds.

Key messages

- **Recognise health equity as a strategic investment priority for Europe's future.** To build a resilient, secure, and competitive Europe, the next MFF must prioritise health equity across all sectors. Despite some progress, health outcomes remain unequally distributed across the EU. Life expectancy varies by up to 10 years between countries and by more than 20 years for some marginalised groups. This reflects persistent health gaps shaped by income, education, gender, geography, and access to equity-enabling living and working conditions.
- **Address the enormous health and social cost of preventable inequalities through smarter investment.** Chronic diseases, poor mental health, pollution-related illness, and poverty-driven health exclusion cost EU economies an estimated €1.3 trillion annually, equivalent to the entire 7-year MFF. Prioritising preventive, early-years, needs-driven, equity-focused action will reduce health and social care costs, boost healthy ageing, improve productivity, and strengthen EU social cohesion.
- **Use the MFF as a catalyst for transformative change and scale up equitable public health systems and equity-enabling infrastructure.** Strategic funding must enable Member States to invest in health-promoting systems while de-risking and elevating promising practice, such as inclusive early years care, low-threshold and community-based mental health support, affordable quality housing, and integrated care - that are essential for social rights, wellbeing, and national and local economic resilience for current and future generations.
- **Institutionalise 'Health in All Policies' across all funding streams.** Apply mandatory Health Equity Impact Assessments (HEIAs) and embed wellbeing criteria across cohesion policy, digital and green transitions, competitiveness, and infrastructure programmes, ensuring alignment with public health goals.

- **Reform MFF governance to centre equity and social participation.** Delivery mechanisms must prioritise inclusive governance, co-creation, and meaningful, empowered engagement of civil society, local actors, including youth, and marginalised communities. Funding structures should strengthen institutional capacity and favour organisations with deep contextual and representative knowledge, rather than defaulting to large private consultancies that may cut costs but often lack expertise in public value.
- **Channel funding toward high-impact, equity-driven investments.** Prioritise actions with strong social returns—such as early childhood development, social prescribing, mental health promotion, clean environments, and workforce inclusion—especially in underserved regions and communities, guided by a **proportionate universalism** approach.
- **Ensure sustained, flexible investment in health and equity.** Expand and integrate programmes like **EU4Health** and **ESF+** to provide long-term, adaptable financing for upstream, intersectoral public health interventions, strengthening capacity for innovation, crisis response, and long-term wellbeing.

Conclusion

The MFF 2028–2034 offers a historic opportunity to reframe public health and equity not as costs, but as investments in Europe's future. A bold and coherent budgetary strategy that integrates health and wellbeing across all EU policies will be essential to building a more inclusive, prosperous, and resilient Europe for all.

About EuroHealthNet

[EuroHealthNet](#) is a not-for-profit European Partnership for health, equity and wellbeing. Our more than 80 members span 31 European countries and include organisations, institutes, and authorities working on public health, health promotion, disease prevention and wellbeing.

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