

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 a smaller EU funding will deliver on the health and social rights political priorities of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 as permacrisis continues.

Europe continues to suffer from converging crises, striving to overcome the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, 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 for minorities such as [Roma](#) are now further exacerbated by high inflation, food and energy costs. EU funding to address those long-standing challenges faces increasing pressure, depending on quickly changing geopolitical priorities.

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

In 2021, at the Porto Social Summit, the EU institutions, social partners, and civil society set targets for a Social Europe by 2030. At [the La Hulpe Social Summit](#), an interinstitutional declaration for a stronger social dimension of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 will be adopted. **We, the European social civil society and public health organizations question whether this can indeed be done while the 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 risk of 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 for a top-up of funds to ensure social cohesion, reducing disparities across the EU, and to avoid future cliff-edge scenarios.

The welcome 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 worries 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, investing in skills, social and health-promoting infrastructure should not be a matter of left or right politics, big or small governments. If it supports Europe's ambition to people-centered recovery and resilience building, and an economy focused on wellbeing of the people, communities, and planet, it's the only way forward.

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

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 Social Platform

[Social Platform](#) is the network of European civil society organizations working on social issues and for a Social Europe.

