



International Nurses Day - ENRF Briefing Note

COVID-19 shows we need an EU's Health Budget with the development of a European Health Data Space

Although the previous European Commission, under the mandate of Juncker, made clear that the Health Programme would be absorbed by other programmes into the enlarged “European Social Fund”, COVID-19 has changed that perspective. And it is key nurse researchers prepare for this new way of thinking.

The long-term budget of the EU is being redrafted due to COVID-19, including what the EU executive officials call a “standalone health programme”. Now the EU Executive is finally arguing for more power to be able to act during health emergencies, in contrast to prior COVID-19, where health risked being taken off of the European Commission political commitments. The Commission now would argue that “experience from the ongoing crisis has demonstrated that the EU would benefit from an ambitious stand-alone Health Programme that is fit-for-purpose”. And it is the 3 last words that are key for nurses and nursing: fit-for-purpose! Nursing Research is key to contribute to the EU Health Research Programme.



The ‘new health programme’ would focus on improving health conditions across all EU Member States through better prevention, access, and treatment. This shift would give the EU institutions greater capacity to act during future health emergencies. A new “emergency response provision” is envisaged as part of the next cohesion programme, running from 2021 to 2027.

The new EU budget proposal is likely to go through changes before it is presented on May 6 to the European Commission’s President, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen. It is expected that the EU Member States will jealously guard their competencies in health, leaving to the EU institutions a residual role of coordinating cross-border health policies. Health policy remains in the scope of the Member States. However, the European Commission has always found ways to increase its role in the sector. The new budget would give the European Commission more financial headroom and discretion to manage spending across several health areas.



At the same time all these are occurring, a group of four Members of the European Parliament, namely [Maria Manuel Leitão Marques](#), [Maria Da Graça Carvalho](#), [Chrysoula Zacharapoulou](#) and [Alexandra Geese](#), are calling for the EU institutions to have greater powers managing the COVID-19 outbreak and the need for creating a European Health Data Space. A European Health Data Space would enable the pooling of health data from EU citizens in a defined and standardised manner. This approach would allow for detailed comparisons between the EU Member States (and their regions) and to

underpin transnational clinical research and trials at a large scale. This would have a positive influence on the current management of the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as better preparing the EU for the future health crisis. Of course, this collection of data at the EU level would take place abiding by the highest ethical standards and the General Data Protection Regulation.

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