



## ENRF Briefing Note on the New EU4Health Programme



Today marks the entry into force of the [EU4Health programme](#), that is, according to the **EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides** *“more than a reaction to the pandemic. With the EU4Health programme, we have the tools at hand to make long-lasting changes”*. Aiming to make a significant contribution to the post-COVID-19 recovery, supporting the fight against cross-border health threats and boosting the EU's preparedness and capability to respond effectively to future health crisis, the [EU4Health 2021-2027](#) is the largest health response made available to fight the effects of the pandemic and the general challenges facing the European Union.

The launch of the programme follows the Council adoption on 17 March, and the vote by the European Parliament on 9 March (with a majority of 631 votes in favour, 31 against and 34 abstentions) of the allocation of **5.1 billion euros** for the next 7 years **to invest in national health systems**, facilitating the availability of drugs, medical devices and others essential products to confront the current crisis.

The EU4Health aims not only to address the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, but also to support **disease prevention programs**, especially cancer, and the implementation of the **digital transformation** of health systems. As the goal is to create a **resilient healthcare system** to **safeguard** the **health** of the citizens of the European Union, it is crucial nursing researchers get involved in submitting proposals.

### Areas of action of EU4Health:

- ✓ Boost EU's preparedness for major cross border health threats by creating
  - reserves of medical supplies for crises
  - a reserve of healthcare staff and experts that can be mobilised to respond to crises across the EU
  - increased surveillance of health threats
- ✓ strengthen health systems so that they can face epidemics as well as long-term challenges by stimulating
  - disease prevention and health promotion in an ageing population
  - [digital transformation](#) of health systems
  - [access to health care](#) for vulnerable groups
- ✓ make [medicines](#) and [medical devices](#) available and affordable, advocate the prudent and efficient use of [antimicrobials](#) as well as promote medical and pharmaceutical innovation and greener manufacturing.

The program has set out to [create](#) a new "European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (**HERA**)" for strengthening the European Health Union with better EU preparedness and response to serious cross-border health threats, by enabling rapid availability, access and distribution of needed countermeasures. In this, nursing research is crucial.

In the [EU4Health Programme Workshop](#), in which the ENRF participated, **potential solutions** were explored for EU-wide health challenges under the **four strands of the Program**.



**Matthew Hudson**, Director Resource Management and Better Regulation, DG SANTE, gave an [overview](#) of the program. On the resilience of the healthcare systems in the EU, the focus will be on strengthening health data, digital tools and services, and digital transformation of the health sector. It is obvious that nurses lead this process and research. Also enhancing access to the healthcare systems (ref to the European Pillar for Social Rights!) is key from a nursing perspective, with a particular research focus on APN!



Matthew added that it is an ambitious program, more substantial than in the past, thanks to the bigger budget made available for **implementing actions and initiatives**. Implementation research will be key!

**Artur Furtado** [mentioned](#) the policy contents and challenges of this program. Artur is Deputy Head of Unit DG Sante C1 - Health Promotion, Disease Prevention, Financial Instruments. Artur is planning a high-level Conference on the Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 on different population groups including children, young and old, families, as well as **health professionals** and informal care providers. The event will be an opportunity to highlight innovative and promising practices on ways to tackle mental health challenges. The event is expected to bring together European and national level decision-makers and experts in mental health, involving Members of the European Parliament, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, stakeholders including patient groups as well as key international partners, and the European Commission.



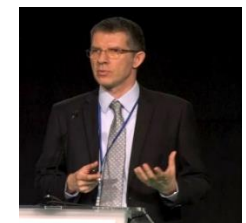
**Hana Horka** from the Cancer Plan Task Force gave an [overview](#) of the important EU cancer plan.

**Ander Elustondo Jauregui**, Policy Officer of DG Sante Unit B3 Digital Health, European Reference Networks, [focused](#) on the digital transformation present in the program: The future of the EU health data space and the health data space infrastructure are key components. As nurses collect a lot of data, it will be essential that co-creation becomes part of the solutions! All the work done on nurse prescribing and ICNP will be key to take further within this new programme.



**Cinthia Menel Lemos**, DG Sante Policy Officer, Unit C3 on Health security, [explained](#) the health security components in the programme. It is important to implement cooperation and coordination to improve cross board coordination. Improving data reporting will be key, as we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. We need more robust data for EU policymaking and decision-making!

**Loukianos Gatzoulis**, DG Sante Policy Officer from Unit B1, performance of national healthcare systems, [addressed](#) the need to strengthen the healthcare systems in terms of policy framework, challenges, pharmaceutical, medical devices and technologies. His presentation was mainly focussed on the ERN, European Reference Networks.



**Elisabeth Kasilingam**, Acting Executive Director of the European Patients Forum [provided](#) the patients feedback on EU4health program. She expressed her desire to establish partnerships and collaboration with other organisations.

**Prof. Jan De Maeseneer** from the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health [presented](#) the actual challenges for the Health Systems as seen through the eyes of this expert panel. Unfortunately, there is not one nursing researchers at this panel! Healthcare workforce resilience is high on the agenda, especially recruitment and retention.





**Ms Nicoline Hoogerbrugge**, ERN Group on rare diseases, focused on the need to spread experiences around the Member States to manage inequalities in Europe. She underlined 2 main aspects:

- 1) Covid-19 crisis → fast responses obtained → this means that coordination allow Europe to put in place fast actions.
- 2) Cancer plan → it need to implement policy prevention in all Member States at the same time.

She concluded that EU4Health should coordinate all Member States to create an infrastructure able to improve the health system.

**Mr Yannis Natsis** from the European Public Health Alliance focused on pharmaceutical strategy. He added that it is fundamental to pay attention to treatment optimization and spread information, next to how health data are collected and managed. The Covid-19 highlighted the need to have EU pharmacological system. He urged to have it at the national and EU level.



**Ms Begonya Nafria** from the Institut de Recerca Sant Joan de Déu, focused on the investment in research for general diseases and in particular for children. She underlined the importance to involve the patients from the early stages of research. She recognised that it is not easy to involve patients and, above all, when they are children. Many patients' organizations can help on this aspect. Collaboration is a key point with new options for the involvement of patients.

**Ms Paola Di Ciaccio** from the Italian National Transplant Centre stated that organisational aspect plays an important role in the implementation of the EU4Health program. It is important to share training programs and the adoption of common protocols to monitor this program. Training and skills development plays an increasingly important role. She urged to ease the exchange of best practices and knowledge by pushing for digitalisation. This sharing could allow to overcome inequalities among EU countries. However, the digital availability depends on the public trust.



**Prof. Piotr Szymański** from the European Society of Cardiology [presented](#) the efficient system of sharing information and priority criteria: medical devices.

This ambitious EU4Health Program will help create health and healthcare systems which are more resilient and able of meeting future challenges. Important actions will need to be implemented to address the challenges of aging populations and the growing health inequalities. It is important to ensure access to health systems for everyone and for sure for the most vulnerable groups, and as such overcome disparities between Member States. In this context, significant resources have been made available to improve research in the health sector. It is therefore a window of opportunity for the nursing researchers to play a key role in this EU4Health programme, the process of transformation and innovation. Let's take this opportunity together!

The programme will be implemented by a new executive agency, the Health and Digital Executive Agency, that will start on 1 April.

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