

A NEW EU GLOBAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Why we need it now

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is the “defining global health crisis of our time” according to WHO Director-General. It came as an unfortunate reminder of the importance of global health to the social, political and economic future of humanity. Investing in public health and supporting strong and resilient health systems is as important as ever.



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The EU hosts many of the best healthcare systems in the world and brings its extensive technical and managerial experience to advancing global health. It has tremendous convening power, a wide scope of action and partnerships, presence in international organisations and global health initiatives’ governing bodies, and the political leverage to address the structural barriers that prevent people from enjoying their right to health.

The EU can also provide coordination, and long-term planning and financing of its actions. However, the EU’s Global Health Framework (European Commission Communication and Council Conclusions) dates back from 2010 and much has changed in global health since then. The EU needs to refresh and renew its vision on global health so it can robustly address new and neglected global health challenges, and adapt to an altered political and policy environment.

To play a greater role in advancing the global health agenda, the EU needs to adopt a new global health strategy which will:

Redefine and clarify the EU’s priorities as a global health leader, set a forward-looking EU vision for global health that supports the EU’s new geopolitical priorities and consolidate the EU’s strategic direction at the multilateral level.

Tackle the key persisting, neglected, or emerging global health challenges that were largely absent from - or insufficiently addressed in - the 2010 Framework or have increased in relevance since its adoption.

Guide the cross-sectoral implementation of the Consensus on Development, and ensure coherence with new health commitments made by the EU. An integrated framework would optimise the use of limited resources, streamline a coherent approach to health, better steer EU efforts and therefore amplify the EU’s impact.

The EU needs to design a global health strategy which provides for improvements on implementation, coordination and coherence, and engagement with civil society:

To demonstrate impact, the new global health strategy needs to be underpinned by a holistic cross-cutting implementation plan accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation process, including measurable, relevant indicators that allow for consistent reporting on progress.

To efficiently and effectively leverage its political and policy influence, the EU needs a strategy that acts like a compass, provides operational guidance and coordinates a holistic approach to global health. Such a strategy should apply to all actors involved in EU global health action and programming, as well as to EU policies which have a direct impact on health, including in the areas of water, climate, human rights, migration, and trade.

To accelerate progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, the EU needs to revamp its engagement with civil society and communities. A new global health strategy could regenerate existing mechanisms in Brussels to ensure meaningful participation of civil society in policy making and programming. In EU partner countries, new strategies could contribute to the diverse and inclusive engagement of civil society and communities in all relevant health decision-making processes.



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ABOUT

This is the executive summary of a more comprehensive paper that maps the key political and policy developments in global health since 2010, and highlights limitations of the EU's 2010 Framework in responding to them.

The examples and analysis in this paper make the case for why the EU requires a new global health strategy to achieve its full potential as a global health leader and ensure that the urgency of responding to the Covid-19 crisis does not lead to an ineffective, uncoordinated response. The paper and this executive summary draw on a literature review and interviews with key informants including policy makers, implementers and civil society representatives. It is complemented by a companion paper which outlines the key elements and principles which we, as global health organisations, believe a new EU GHS should include.



¹ WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19, March 16, 2020, available at: <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---16-march-2020>

² European Commission (2010). Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee Of The Regions - The EU Role in Global Health. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-eu-role-in-globalhealth-com2010128-20100331_en.pdf
The Commission Staff Working Document Contributing to universal coverage of health services through development policy; The Commission Staff Working Document Global health - responding to the challenges of globalization; The Commission Staff a Document European research and knowledge for global health.