

HARNESSING EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS AND INVESTMENT FOR A HEALTHY EUROPE 2021-2027

A toolkit for improving public health
DECEMBER 2020

About EPHA

EPHA is a change agent – Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. We are a dynamic member-led organisation, made up of public health civil society, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.



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Executive summary

This toolkit outlines the case for putting EU funds to use to improve public health (section 2), summarises the funding and investment available and relevant for public health at a European level (section 3), and lastly provides some guidance on how to make the most of available resources to build a healthy European Union for all (section 4).

It also demonstrates how Health in All Policies should be applied when using EU funds and that they are delivered in line with EU policy fields and following the the World Health Organization's Health Governance approach.

Public health policies, particularly related to health promotion and prevention, suffer from a lack of investment across Europe, yet would bring considerable social, economic, health and environmental benefits if they were seriously addressed across society and policy silos.

The European Union budget in the next long-term period 2021-2027 offers multiple opportunities for Member States to help build a healthy Europe, and to combine that objective with a plethora of other important goals including:

- fighting the climate crisis and environmental degradation,
- tackling socio-economic and regional inequalities,
- improving healthcare systems,
- ensuring a fair, open and secure digital environment,
- addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Many EU funds focus on particular objectives, although health aspects can be incorporated into most projects. Synergies are not only possible, but desirable; projects will return the biggest result if they break down barriers, work long-term and combine both tangible and intangible investments. Ultimately, the combination of public health and EU financing represents a win-win scenario for all Europeans.

1. Introduction: The EU public health budget

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the fundamental importance of public health into stark relief, with inadequate action on issues prior to the crisis, such as in the areas of disease prevention, commercial determinants of health, health promotion and tackling inequalities all increasing the impact of the pandemic. In response to COVID-19 and its wide-ranging effects on health, well-being and the economy, the European Commission (EC) proposed in May 2020 a revised long-term budget, the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027. The new budget is intended to boost the European Union's (EU) crisis response and set the EU on a path to building back better – to be in an improved position to reach its long-term goals and boost citizens' well-being.¹

The revised budget frontloads financial support, to help EU Member States recover and kick-start their economies, incorporating lessons learnt from the pandemic into the MFF. The European Commission has emphasised that:

“The crisis has shown that funding for health must be given higher priority in the future financial framework.”²

The adjustments to the budget give a bigger focus to health in general, in particular by resurrecting a separate EU4Health programme with significantly increased funding, which addresses health security, crisis preparedness and longer-term prevention, promotion and capacity building. In her state of the European Union speech Commission President Ursula von der Leyen indicated that the importance of health will only grow under her Commission, outlining her focus on protecting lives and livelihoods and improving the health of citizens. She went even further, putting the new proposal into a different strategic framework by saying:

“For me, it is crystal clear – we need to build a stronger European Health Union.”³

This demonstrates that public health will be a significant priority for the EU going forward, and offers Member States the opportunity to take advantage of this.

After ten weeks of discussions, negotiators for the Council of the EU and the European Parliament agreed a budget deal on 10 November 2020, based on their respective positions.⁴ The European Council's initial position cut the proposed Health programme from the €9.4 billion proposed by the Commission to just €1.7bn.⁵ However, the European Parliament was successful in persuading the German Presidency (representing the Council) to allocate an extra €16 billion in total, to be spread across the Horizon Europe research programme and the health programme, alongside others.^{6 7} This brought the proposed - and ultimately agreed - total for the EU4Health programme up to €5.1 billion.

1 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:4524c01c-a0e6-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

2 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:4524c01c-a0e6-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

3 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655

4 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2073

5 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>

6 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201106IPR91014/compromise-on-long-term-eu-budget-ep-obtains-EU16-billion-more-for-key-programmes>

7 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/10/next-multiannual-financial-framework-and-recovery-package-council-presidency-reaches-political-agreement-with-the-european-parliament/>

The deal was finally agreed by the European Council on 17 December 2020, following the consent of the European Parliament the previous day. Member state parliaments still have to approve decisions related to the EU raising its own revenue, before the Next Generation EU recovery instrument can be implemented.⁸ It is imperative that national managing authorities are prepared to harness the available funds and support available under the MFF in order to reach the best outcomes for public health.

Public health is a cross-cutting issue that bears huge relevance for many areas of policy work and funding, and vice versa – as demonstrated by the EU’s legal obligation to ensure Health in all Policies.⁹ This cross-cutting character provides huge potential for generating and harnessing synergies between various silos, such as between climate and environmental breakdown and public health, or put another way, between planetary and individual health. Regional, social and digital funding streams can also all be viewed through a health prism and used to improve health and well-being across the continent. COVID-19 has illustrated the inter-connections between these various issues and shows clearly that the response needs to be similarly broad-ranging.

2. Why include Public health in EU funds’ national operational programmes?

2.1 The current context: social determinants and lack of investment

70% of European citizens want more action on health.¹⁰ However, there remains a persistent lack of investment in public health, particularly in health promotion and disease prevention, which according to some observers has led to a

“well-documented investment crisis in social infrastructure for health, education, and social services, which directly affects the health and well-being of all citizens. Since the 2008 financial crisis, public investment in social infrastructure has reduced dramatically, remaining 20% lower than a decade ago. It is estimated that the investment gap in social infrastructure in the EU is more than €150 billion per year.”¹¹

Health is not an individual choice, but primarily a result of the living, working and social environment in which people are born, grow and live. Relevant conditions, known as determinants of health, include access to resources such as education, employment, housing, healthcare and prevention services, but also environmental hazards, tobacco and alcohol use, poor nutrition, food insecurity and mental health.¹² Such contextual factors affect entire population groups and lead to vulnerabilities in many key areas of their lives, including health. The unemployed, elderly, patients, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities including Roma, undocumented migrants, prisoners, sex workers, LGBTIQ+ and homeless people are just some of the groups more likely to face unequal access to healthcare and preventive services.¹³

8 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/>

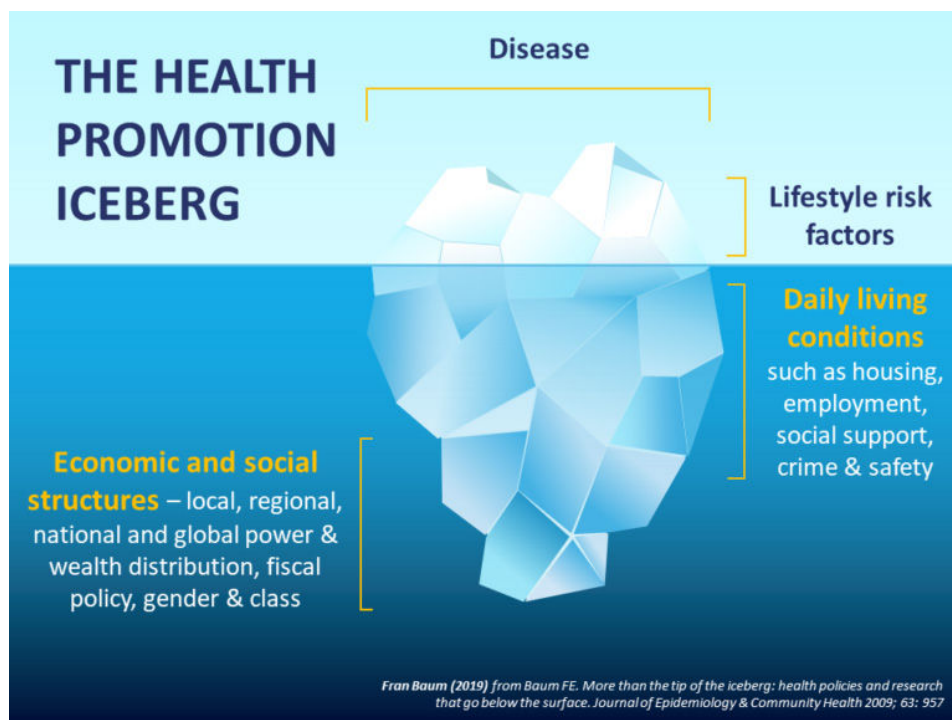
9 HiAP, Article 168, TFEU

10 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/eu-citizens-need-health-and-well-being-as-a-policy-priority-stakeholders-say/>

11 Fransen, L., Del Bufalo, G., & Reviglio, E. (2018). Boosting investment in social infrastructure in Europe. rapport de la task-force de haut niveau sur les infrastructures sociales en Europe) discussion paper (74)

12 <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/epha-health-inequalities-a-public-health-challenge-for-european-policy-makers.pdf>

13 <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/epha-health-inequalities-a-public-health-challenge-for-european-policy-makers.pdf>



Given these complex and connected issues, effective public health policy must therefore adopt a Health in All policies perspective when funding projects, so as to increase collaboration across sectors and stimulate novel approaches.¹⁴ Health promotion is a useful way in which to address some of these more systemic issues.

*“Health promotion is defined as the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. It represents a comprehensive social and political process, which includes actions for improving the skills and ability of individuals to increase control over the determinants of health, and actions towards changing social, environmental and economic conditions to address their impact on public and individual health”.*¹⁵

Despite the benefits of health promotion, health policy tends to focus on healthcare to the detriment of all the above determinants of health and disease prevention. Improved access to healthcare is not enough in itself to combat or eliminate health issues as the determinants will persist as long as social disparities do. Therefore, it is not possible to resolve Europe’s health issues without addressing the underlying determinants.

Health investment can also favour so-called hard infrastructure, such as hospitals and medical equipment, over soft infrastructure, like education and training. Only 3% of health system expenditure across Europe is assigned to public health, health promotion and disease prevention. By comparison, around two thirds is spent on curative and rehabilitative care, with the remainder on medical goods and governance.¹⁶ Public funding has a crucial role to play in unlocking further private investment and helping to redress the balance between investment in soft and hard infrastructures.¹⁷

¹⁴ http://www.esifundsforshealth.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Final%20Report%20ESI%20Funds%20for%20Health_2.pdf

¹⁵ <https://health-inequalities.eu/financing-e-guide/what-is-health-promotion/>

¹⁶ <https://health-inequalities.eu/financing-e-guide/what-is-health-promotion/>

¹⁷ <https://eurohealthnet.eu/publication/financing-health-promoting-services-information-guide>

2.2 Benefits to public health investment

However, there are huge benefits to investing in public health. Simply put, public health policies are an investment opportunity: the median rate of return on public health interventions is one to fourteen, meaning that every monetary unit invested in public health gives an average return of fourteen times as much to the economy.¹⁸ For example, a 60% reduction in air pollution would save over 5000 premature deaths, as well as generating savings from reduced pollution damage and healthcare costs, to the tune of €5-10 billion and €110 billion respectively.¹⁹ These savings can then be reinvested to continue tackling pressing challenges. Public health investment therefore also delivers benefits in tackling the climate breakdown and advancing the European Green Deal. Further reasons to invest in health promoting services include economic and financial changes, technological developments and demographic changes (particularly migration and ageing).²⁰ In short, rather than seeing health as a cost, we need to understand health as an asset that delivers return on investment, and a common good that needs to be preserved.

Further, the cross-cutting nature of public health offers major opportunities to break out of traditional policy silos, to work across sectors and maximise potential synergies. Given the complexity of the challenges faced, these problems cannot be managed solely by health departments as solutions often require changes to multiple systemic factors. It is important to stress that key determinants of health actually lie outside of the health sector, so cross-sectoral cooperation is key in the development of integrated solutions to deal with them effectively and to ensure a better continuity of care for the community.

In short, public health policies – particularly upstream – lack investment across Europe, yet would bring considerable social, economic, health and environmental benefits were they to be concertedly addressed across society and policy silos. Simultaneously, the EU funds available to Member States offer considerable opportunities to advance these goals, making use of the existing synergies. The relevant funds and how they might be used, are outlined in the next section.

18 <https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827>

19 https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/eu-climate-action/docs/impact_en.pdf

20 <https://health-inequalities.eu/financing-e-guide/strategy-and-forward-thinking/>

3. Which funds are relevant for health, and how can they be harnessed?

This section provides an overview of the themes in the European budget which are relevant for public health and the funds related to those themes. Many of the programmes can be combined and co-funded by Member States and private investors.

3.1 Digital

The digital transition is of huge importance to healthcare and health promotion. For instance, super-computing capacity can help develop solutions for medicines, environmental issues and contribute to Europe’s climate goals.²¹ Projects can integrate digital technologies to improve citizen access to health data, to move towards person-centred care through digital tools, or to support doctors in making faster and better decisions. Digital projects can also contribute to the development of a Health Data Space, which is one of the current Commission’s priorities. This will help to foster targeted research, diagnosis and treatment, and lead to health innovation.²² Digital health projects can therefore empower both patients and health professionals.

Table 1: Digital health funds

FUND	OVERVIEW
Digital Europe	<p>The programme aims to build the EU’s digital capacities and facilitate the wide deployment of digital technologies. It particularly targets investments in supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensures the wide use of digital technologies across economies and societies,²³ as well as building capacity for new digital technologies. This is targeted to support digital transformation that will guarantee high quality public services benefiting citizens and businesses.²⁴</p> <p>The digital skills focus particularly addresses employment issues, which is an important determinant of health. This strand will also be supported by ESF+, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.²⁵</p>

21 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-europe-programme-proposed-eu82-billion-funding-2021-2027>

22 https://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/dataspace_en

23 See official information per fund for links to information on each of these themes.

24 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/europe-investing-digital-digital-europe-programme>

25 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/digital-skills>

Connecting Europe facility	The facility aims to sustainably and efficiently invest in infrastructure for transport, energy and digital services. It will be in its second iteration in 2021-2027 and the EC has proposed a budget of €3 billion, mostly focussed on connectivity. Projects contribute to interconnection and interoperability of national, regional and local networks and the development of the Digital Single Market. ²⁶ The eventual budget is considerably higher than the EC proposal, with around €1.8 billion allocated to digital. ²⁷
Cohesion and regional funds	Cohesion funds aim to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions, focussing on five main objectives, two of which touch on the digital transition. These are: Smarter Europe (including digitisation) and A More Connected Europe (including digital networks). ²⁸

3.2 Environment & climate

Environmental factors are important determinants of health, from the food we eat, to the air we breathe, the buildings in which we live, the ways in which we travel, and whether we have adequate energy for warming, cooling and lighting our homes.²⁹ The climate crisis is a major threat to human health not just because of the increased incidence of floods, heatwaves and droughts, but also because it can facilitate the spread of infectious diseases. Housing is a key social determinant of health, and has significant environmental and climate impacts. For example, energy poverty increases the risk of respiratory and cardiac illnesses and also affects mental health.³⁰ Therefore, environmental and public health objectives are easily combined when designing and carrying out projects.

As a result of the European Green Deal, a large amount of EU funding is dedicated to achieving the EU's environmental goals. The European Green Deal is the overarching plan to make the EU's economy sustainable through a wide range of action plans, laws and funding. Part of the Green Deal is a commitment to "climate mainstreaming" within EU funding - meaning that 30% of the MFF, and NextGenerationEU funding will contribute to climate goals.^{31 32}

26 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/connecting-europe-facility>

27 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47567/mff-2021-2027_rev.pdf

28 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-new-framework-glance_en.pdf

29 <https://epha.org/a-healthy-european-green-deal/>

30 Op cit

31 https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/budget/mainstreaming_en

32 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_2088

Table 2: Environmental health funds

FUND	OVERVIEW
<p>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)</p>	<p>The ERDF will focus on five main objectives, including “a greener, carbon free Europe” and “a Europe closer to citizens.”³³ Actions under these can address climate and environmental issues, together with social and health ones, maximising co-benefits.</p>
<p>European Green Deal (EGD) investment plan</p>	<p>The European Green Deal investment plan aims to transform the European Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth is decoupled from resource use, and no person and no place is left behind. The investment plan will mobilise at least €1 trillion over the next ten years to support sustainable investments.³⁴</p> <p>There are many opportunities for combining EGD target areas, which include climate, biodiversity, food and agriculture, chemicals and circular economy³⁵ with health promotion objectives. This could be achieved for example, through the Farm to Fork strategy, which combines nutrition and environmental aspects.³⁶ The various sectoral strategies of the EGD will open new pathways for partnerships, funding and investments.</p>
<p>Just Transition Fund</p>	<p>The EC proposed the Just Transition Fund to help support those in regions most impacted by the transition away from a carbon intensive economy. It aims to mobilise at least €100 billion between 2021 and 2027.³⁷ The fund will invest in vital areas for a healthy life and environment, such as employment, skills, housing and clean energy.</p>

33 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/

34 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_24

35 <https://epha.org/a-healthy-european-green-deal/>

36 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork_en

37 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/01/14-01-2020-financing-the-green-transition-the-european-green-deal-investment-plan-and-just-transition-mechanism

Horizon Europe	Horizon Europe is the EU's €841.4 billion ³⁸ research and innovation programme, which also covers climate-related research that has benefits for public health. Four of the programme's five Research & Innovation mission areas directly concern climate and environmental challenges – namely, adaptation to climate change, climate-neutral and smart cities, healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, and soil health and food. ³⁹ These missions are explicitly cross-discipline. 35% of the Horizon Europe budget should go to tackling the climate crisis. ⁴⁰
LIFE	The LIFE programme is the EU funding stream for environment, climate and nature projects. The MFF includes €4.8 billion for the programme across four sub-programmes: nature and biodiversity, circular economy and quality of life, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and clean energy transition. ⁴¹ Several of these areas could include public health objectives.
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	Part of the Common Agricultural Policy, the EAFRD supports the vibrancy and economic viability of rural communities, helping them to achieve environmental and climate goals in rural areas. ⁴²

3.3 Inequalities

The most disadvantaged in European societies, generally also have the worst outlook on health.⁴³ Uneven access to resources, such as healthcare and preventive services, education, employment and housing based on social inequalities, is the main obstacle to health equity in European society. Undocumented migrants, prisoners, sex workers, LGBTIQ+ people⁴⁴, as well as homeless people, refugees, patients, the elderly, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities (including Roma) are among the groups that struggle to maintain good health. These population groups are more vulnerable to the economic and social dynamics that Europe has experienced in the past years, and face higher exposure to air pollution, radiation and contamination, poor nutrition and food insecurity, as well as harmful tobacco and alcohol consumption, and may find it harder to access and benefit from digital health transitions.⁴⁵ These inequalities persist and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶

Issues such as child protection, early childhood development (ECD), decent housing

38 <https://www.politico.eu/article/takeaways-from-the-eu-council-and-parliament-budget-deal/>; https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47567/mff-2021-2027_rev.pdf

39 https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe_en

40 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/ec_rtd_he-presentation_062019_en.pdf

41 <http://www.life4ir.com/the-life-programme/>

42 https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/rural-development_en

43 <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/epha-health-inequalities-a-public-health-challenge-for-european-policy-makers.pdf>

44 https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/policies/docs/ev_20191017_co06_en.pdf

45 <https://epha.org/health-inequalities-a-public-health-challenge-for-european-policy-makers/>

46 <https://epha.org/lessening-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-vulnerable-groups/>

and sustainable urban development are therefore all highly relevant for health promotion. European social, cohesion and regional development funding streams offer ample opportunities to address these persistent health inequalities. The Asylum and Migration Fund also offers the possibility of improving the health conditions of this specific vulnerable group in projects related to their early integration.⁴⁷

Table 3: Health inequality funds

FUND	OVERVIEW
Cohesion Fund	The Cohesion Fund is aimed at Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. ⁴⁸ Cohesion policy invests in EU regions on the basis of their level of development and a number of criteria, which in 2021-27 will include youth unemployment, education level, climate change and reception of migrants. ⁴⁹
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	The ERDF aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions, focussing on five main objectives, several of which touch on inequalities. Those of relevance are Smarter Europe (including economic transformation) and a More Social Europe, which covers employment, education, skills, inclusion and access to healthcare. ⁵⁰ 6% of the ERDF has been earmarked for investments in sustainable urban development, relevant for housing, air quality and energy transition. ⁵¹
European Social Fund+ (ESF+)	The ESF+'s main aim is to contribute to a more social Europe and make the European Pillar of Social Rights a reality on the ground - improving upward economic and social convergence across Europe. It will focus on three main areas: education and skills, labour market effectiveness and equal access to quality employment, and social inclusion, ^{52 53} with 11 specific objectives under those headings. Active and healthy ageing, digital skills, access to quality sustainable and affordable services and the effectiveness and resilience of healthcare and systems are included as specific objectives. ⁵⁴ At least 25% of its funds are earmarked for initiatives on social inclusion, focussing on a few particularly disadvantaged groups, and fighting poverty alongside labour market integration. ⁵⁵ Social and living conditions are important determinants of health, highly relevant for health promotion and disease prevention.

47 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-fair-migration-policy_en_0.pdf

48 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/

49 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-tailored-approach-regional-needs_en.pdf

50 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-new-framework-glance_en.pdf

51 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/

52 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=62&langId=en;>

53 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_18_3922

54 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/informing/dialog/2018/2_empl.pdf

55 <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/funding/future-eu-funds>

European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGAF)	<p>The EGAF provides support to people losing their jobs as a result of major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation, for example, when a large company shuts down or production is moved outside the EU, or because of global economic and financial crisis. The fund can provide up to 60% of the costs for projects that help workers find another job or to set up their own business. This could cover careers advice, education, training and re-training, mentoring and coaching, entrepreneurship and business creation, mobility/relocation allowances, subsistence allowances or similar support.⁵⁶ This fund is more reactive than preventive, as money is only released after a significant restructuring occurs, but it could still be an important tool in protecting public health in affected regions.⁵⁷ This is relevant for health as employment status and income are important determinants of health.</p>
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	<p>Part of the Common Agricultural Policy, the EAFRD supports the vibrancy and economic viability of rural communities, where health inequalities exist and are often even more extreme.⁵⁸</p>
Just Transition Fund	<p>This fund will help those in regions most impacted by the transition away from a carbon intensive economy, to minimise regional inequalities, investing in vital bases for a healthy life and society, such as employment, skills, housing and clean energy.⁵⁹</p>

56 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=326>

57 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_18_3922

58 https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/130726/e94659.pdf

59 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/01/14-01-2020-financing-the-green-transition-the-european-green-deal-investment-plan-and-just-transition-mechanism

<p>Asylum and Migration Fund</p>	<p>The AMF will provide funding for asylum, return, integration, resettlement and relocation of third-country nationals. Support is restricted to reception and early stage integration measures, with the ESF+ funding medium and long-term integration.⁶⁰ 30% of the funds are earmarked for integration, alongside national allocations.</p> <p>The fund represents an additional opportunity for implementing projects, capacity building and other activities in health protection and prevention, in the early stages of integration. Special support is provisioned for local and regional authorities and civil society. The fund will also be mostly administered through the Member States’ national programmes, which will address the specific needs of each EU country. However, the part of the fund that is directly managed by the Commission will also increase, allowing for the financing, for example, of transnational projects.⁶¹</p>
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3.4 Healthcare and pandemic response

The revived EU4Health programme offers many opportunities to address healthcare and health systems, along with several upstream issues, alone or in combination with other funding streams. There is also plenty of support available for public health research and innovation. Specifically, the EU is developing a Europe Beating Cancer Plan, and the disease is therefore a priority in European funding.⁶² This could be linked to issues around social conditions, agriculture and diets, and air pollution, alongside others, as these also affect the incidence of cancer. Further, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has reinforced some programmes and investment plans, which can also be set to work addressing public health issues.

Table 4: Healthcare funding

FUND	OVERVIEW
<p>EU4Health</p>	<p>Programme priorities include cancer, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), vaccination, expanding European Reference Networks, tackling cross-border threats, making medicines available and affordable, and strengthening health systems.⁶³</p>

⁶⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/funding/future-eu-funds>

⁶¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/funding/future-eu-funds>

⁶² https://ec.europa.eu/health/non_communicable_diseases/cancer_en

⁶³ https://ec.europa.eu/health/funding/eu4health_en

Horizon Europe	Horizon Europe includes a health cluster to tackle challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, the extension of clinical trials, innovative protective measures, virology, vaccines, treatments and diagnostics, and the translation of research findings into public health policy measures. ^{64 65} Also included is a cancer mission, ⁶⁶ linked to the Europe Beating Cancer Plan, and numerous partnerships on digital health, health innovation, and climate-related subjects that could benefit health.
RescEU	RescEU is part of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism ⁶⁷ and strengthens cooperation between participating states in the field of civil protection, with a view to improving prevention, preparedness and responsiveness to disasters. ⁶⁸ In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, RescEU has created a strategic stockpile of medical equipment that is hosted by Member States and distributed to those most in need. ⁶⁹

3.5 Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is another significant long-term health challenge, which has relevance for the single market and agricultural and rural development policy.

Table 5: AMR Funding

FUND	OVERVIEW
EU4Health Horizon Europe	Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is included as a priority. ⁷⁰ (See <i>Table 5 above for more detail</i>)
Single Market Programme	The Single Market Programme consolidates a number of activities to strengthen the single market, with a budget of €3.7 billion. ⁷¹ The programme includes strands related to animal and plant health and welfare, which is highly relevant in tackling and preventing the significant health challenge of antimicrobial resistance. ⁷²
EAFRD	Food, health and AMR have been included among the specific objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy 2021-2027 ⁷³ so there is certainly funding available to address this problem under EU agriculture policy.

64 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/presentations/horizon_europe_en_investing_to_shape_our_future.pdf

65 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_covid19-recovery-factsheet.pdf

66 https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/cancer_en

67 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en

68 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/resceu_en

69 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_476

70 https://ec.europa.eu/health/funding/eu4health_en

71 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47567/mff-2021-2027_rev.pdf

72 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-new-boost-for-jobs-growth-and-investment/file-mff-programme-for-single-market-and-competitiveness-of-enterprises>

73 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/cap_briefs_9_final.pdf

3.6 Overarching programmes and support

A number of overarching investment streams are also relevant for health.

Table 6: Other relevant funds

PROGRAMME	OVERVIEW
<p>Invest EU</p>	<p>InvestEU is the successor to the Juncker Plan, the EU’s previous investment strategy. It brings together thirteen current EU financial instruments. It aims to trigger at least €650 billion in additional investment across four policy windows.⁷⁴ The EU itself will provide a €26.2 billion guarantee to encourage other actors to invest.⁷⁵ The windows are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable infrastructure (€9.9 billion) • Research, innovation and digitisation (€6.6 billion) • SMEs (€6.9 billion) • Social investment and skills (€2.8 billion) <p>Actions under the social investment and skills window will aim at upwards convergence, reducing inequalities, increasing resilience and inclusiveness, promoting employment, social enterprises, social inclusion, improving citizens’ health, well-being and overall quality of life, and supporting a just transition to a low carbon economy.⁷⁶ The sustainable infrastructure pillar is also relevant for improving determinants of health.</p> <p>InvestEU also targets investments in social enterprises, education, training, social housing, integration of migrants, and other social sectors, emphasising the inclusion of vulnerable people.⁷⁷ It will also be able to be blended with support from other programmes, including Horizon Europe and Connecting Europe.⁷⁸</p>

74 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/jobs-growth-and-investment/investment-plan-europe-juncker-plan/whats-next-investeu-programme-2021-2027_en

75 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_947

76 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-june2018-investeu-finance_en.pdf

77 <https://health-inequalities.eu/financing-e-guide/investeu-other-funds/>

78 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_947

Next Generation EU	Next Generation EU is a €750 billion temporary instrument to boost the recovery from COVID-19. It comprises the Recovery and Resilience Facility which makes €672.5 billion in loans and grants available to support reforms and investments undertaken by EU countries to aid recovery and repair. ⁷⁹ The remainder of the funds boost other programmes: NextGenerationEU also includes €47.5 billion for REACT-EU (see below), and brings additional money to other European programmes or funds such as Horizon2020, InvestEU, rural development or the Just Transition Fund (JTF). It also includes specific support for individual Member States. ⁸⁰
ReactEU	ReactEU is a further crisis response and repair programme in response to the COVID-19 crisis. It adds €47.55 billion ⁸¹ to currently ongoing cohesion programmes. It will be distributed based on the level of prosperity and the socio-economic effects of the crisis on Member States. ⁸²

There are also several Europe-wide investment banks that can provide financial support, advice and assistance to projects within their regions, alongside national investment banks. The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** currently has four main priorities: innovation and skills, small businesses, infrastructure, and climate and environment. They are also active in healthcare, focussing on projects which enable universal access to health services (including preventive actions) and sustainable health services. Skills, infrastructure, and climate and environment are all also potentially relevant for public health. The EIB is the main implementing partner of the InvestEU programme.⁸³

Further, the **Council of Europe Development Bank** targets:

- inclusive growth – working to guarantee access to economic opportunity for all
- support for vulnerable groups, and
- sustainability

The bank particularly focusses on inequities, for example, by targeting projects to support the homeless, elderly, unemployed and otherwise vulnerable people.⁸⁴

Finally, the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** covers many themes including asylum seekers and refugees, support for SMEs, procurement, trade finance, green economic transition, COVID-19 recovery, economic inclusion and food security.⁸⁵

Clearly the EU budget offers many pathways and entry points to address public

79 https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/recovery-plan-europe/pillars-next-generation-eu_en

80 https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/recovery-plan-europe/pillars-next-generation-eu_en

81 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/coronavirus-response/react-eu

82 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/react-eu_and_cohesion_policy_factsheet.pdf

83 <https://eurohealthnet.eu/publication/financing-health-promoting-services-information-guide>

84 Op cit. <https://coebank.org/en/>

85 <https://www.ebrd.com/home>

health policy, preventing disease and promoting environments and factors that support good health. Happily, these objectives also overlap to a large degree with many other important and pressing societal goals, meaning there are many possibilities to achieve win-win outcomes using EU funds.

4. How to get the most from public health projects

Several guidelines can be given to help get the most out of public health-relevant projects.

4.1. Work cross-sector as much as possible

The categorisation of the funds above into themes is a rough guide rather than the “be all and end all”. Many EU funds are relevant for several themes, if not all of those mentioned. Multiple themes and funds can be combined and studies have shown that cross-sectoral projects and ways of working are the most effective, as they help avoid isolated and fragmented results.^{86 87} The EU also emphasises the benefits of synergies throughout its budget communications.^{88 89} The graphic below, from a Horizon Europe document, shows how synergies across the MFF and other EU and Member State policy interventions can radically increase the impact of EU-funded projects.



Beyond being beneficial, health challenges require holistic cross-cutting responses – both across policy sectors and geographical borders – due to their very nature.⁹⁰ The main levers of health lie outside the health sector, across the social, economic, agricultural and environmental sectors. Policy-makers and health professionals cannot tackle health inequalities without the support and cooperation of their colleagues in the fields of housing, urbanisation, transport, social services, education, employment, environment and other policy areas, as well as those from non-health policy and professional communities, including teachers, employers, local entrepreneurs, urban and rural planners, among others. All these actors need to address health inequalities and examine determinants of health together. Systemic, systematic approaches which maximise synergies and coordination and that break down silos are therefore key to achieving the requisite improvements.

⁸⁶ http://www.esifundsforhealth.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Final%20Report%20ESI%20Funds%20for%20Health_2.pdf

⁸⁷ <https://health-inequalities.eu/financing-e-guide/>

⁸⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/presentations/horizon_eu-rop_e_investing_to_shape_our_future.pdf

⁸⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-more-opportunities-synergies_en.pdf

⁹⁰ http://www.esifundsforhealth.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Final%20Report%20ESI%20Funds%20for%20Health_2.pdf

4.2 Consider long-term goals and results

The generally project-based nature of funding in many areas can create obstacles. Often projects do not last long enough to enable the results to be clearly visible, leading to a focus on the short-term and a lack of continuity between different projects. Sustainable results require a longer-term outlook, better indicators to track impact, and coordination from past to current and future projects to create continuity.

4.3 Balance soft and hard investments

As mentioned in section 2, there is also often a tendency to favour large-scale, high-profile “hard infrastructure” projects, while soft investments such as training and skills are neglected. Capacity-building, bringing together stakeholders, investment in people and processes are all examples of essential soft investments. Hard investments are generally preferred due to their higher political profile and clear visible returns. Traditional “hard” infrastructure remains important, but it is key that it should not crowd out soft investments, as both are necessary to truly tackle the issues at hand. The combination of soft and hard investment together in a single project, or through multiple projects under a broader plan has been shown to boost impacts.

Simply put, health can be incorporated into most projects and areas of policy, with projects reaping the biggest rewards if they break down barriers, work long-term and combine both tangible and intangible investments.

5. Conclusion

This toolkit shows why public health should be an investment priority and highlights the multiple opportunities to fill the public health funding gap using the European Union long-term budget. Public health policies – particularly upstream – lack investment across Europe, yet should be seen as assets that will deliver on the investment made, bringing sizeable social, economic, health and environmental benefits if they are addressed across society and policy silos.

Simultaneously, the European Union budget offers multiple opportunities to help build a healthy Europe, and to combine that objective with a plethora of other important goals including fighting the climate crisis and environmental degradation, tackling socio-economic and regional inequalities, improving healthcare systems, promoting the digital agenda and addressing AMR. There are many EU funds which focus on particular objectives, but the funds are characterised more by their overlaps than their distinctions. Therefore, operational plans should seek to take advantage of these synergies, combining different funding streams and objectives to promote cross-cutting holistic projects that include health. Happily, health can be incorporated into most projects and areas of policy, and projects will return the biggest result if they break down barriers, work long-term and combine both tangible and intangible investments. Ultimately, the combination of public health and EU financing represents a win-win scenario for all Europeans.

Annex 1: Official information per fund and investment programme 2021-2027 (if available)

Asylum and Migration Fund - <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/funding/future-eu-funds>

Cohesion fund and European Regional Development Fund - https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/

Connecting Europe Facility - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/connecting-europe-facility>

Digital Europe Programme - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/europe-investing-digital-digital-europe-programme>

- **Supercomputing** - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/high-performance-computing>
- **Artificial intelligence** - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/artificial-intelligence>
- **Cybersecurity** - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/cybersecurity>
- **Advanced digital skills** - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/digital-skills>

Ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society, including through **Digital Innovation Hubs** - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-innovation-hubs>

EU4Health Programme - https://ec.europa.eu/health/funding/eu4health_en

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) / European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) - https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/financing-cap/cap-funds_en

European Green Deal Investment Fund - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_24

European Regional Development Fund – *See under Cohesion fund.*

European Social Fund+ - <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=62&langId=en>

Horizon Europe - https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe_en

Just Transition Mechanism - https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism_en

InvestEU -

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/jobs-growth-and-investment/investment-plan-europe-juncker-plan/whats-next-investeu-programme-2021-2027_en

LIFE - <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/life>

Next Generation EU - https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en#nextgenerationeu

Annex 2: Helpful Resources

Overview of funding programmes (2014-2020, will be updated when MFF approved)

ESI Funds for Health: The ESI Funds for Health project mapped and assessed more than 7,000 health-related projects supported by the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds during the first four years of the 2014-2020 spending period. This final report contains a summary of the key outcomes emerging from this 2-year project. Key findings about the use of ESI funds to support each of the six health-related themes are presented along a set of identified success factors and challenges, cross-thematic and country specific conclusions and recommendations, and recommendations looking ahead to the next programming period.

E-guide for Financing Health Promoting Services: This e-guide aims to build a body of evidence and information and offer examples that will inspire. It has three main purposes: 1 Provide concrete “out-of-the-box’ examples of how investment in health promotion and disease prevention can be mobilised; 2 Encourage building alliances, connections, and bridges within and across sectors to improve health and wellbeing for a healthier society; and 3 Assert the need for systemic change and strengthening of health promotion and disease prevention services as part of sustainable health systems. Developed by EuroHealthNet

EuroHealthNet website

European Investment project portal: Are you a project promoter based in the EU, and want to reach potential investors worldwide? Register your project in the European Investment Project Portal (EIPP) and boost its visibility to a large network of international investors!

Shaping Europe’s Digital Future: Funding opportunities portal, including eHealth and mHealth projects.

Horizon Europe Partnerships: European Partnerships bring the European Commission and private and/or public partners together to address some of Europe’s most pressing challenges through concerted research and innovation initiatives. They are a key implementation tool of Horizon Europe, and contribute significantly to achieving the EU’s political priorities. By bringing private and

and public partners together, European Partnerships help to avoid the duplication of investments and contribute to reducing the fragmentation of the research and innovation landscape in the EU. Horizon Europe information per mission:

- Adaptation to climate change
- Cancer
- Climate neutral and smart cities
- Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters
- Soil health and food

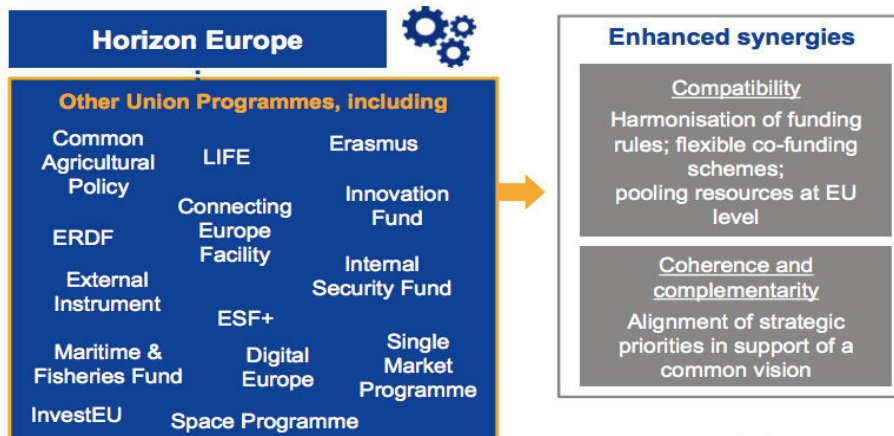
Health inequalities paper: An overview of the social, economic and environmental determinants causing health disparities

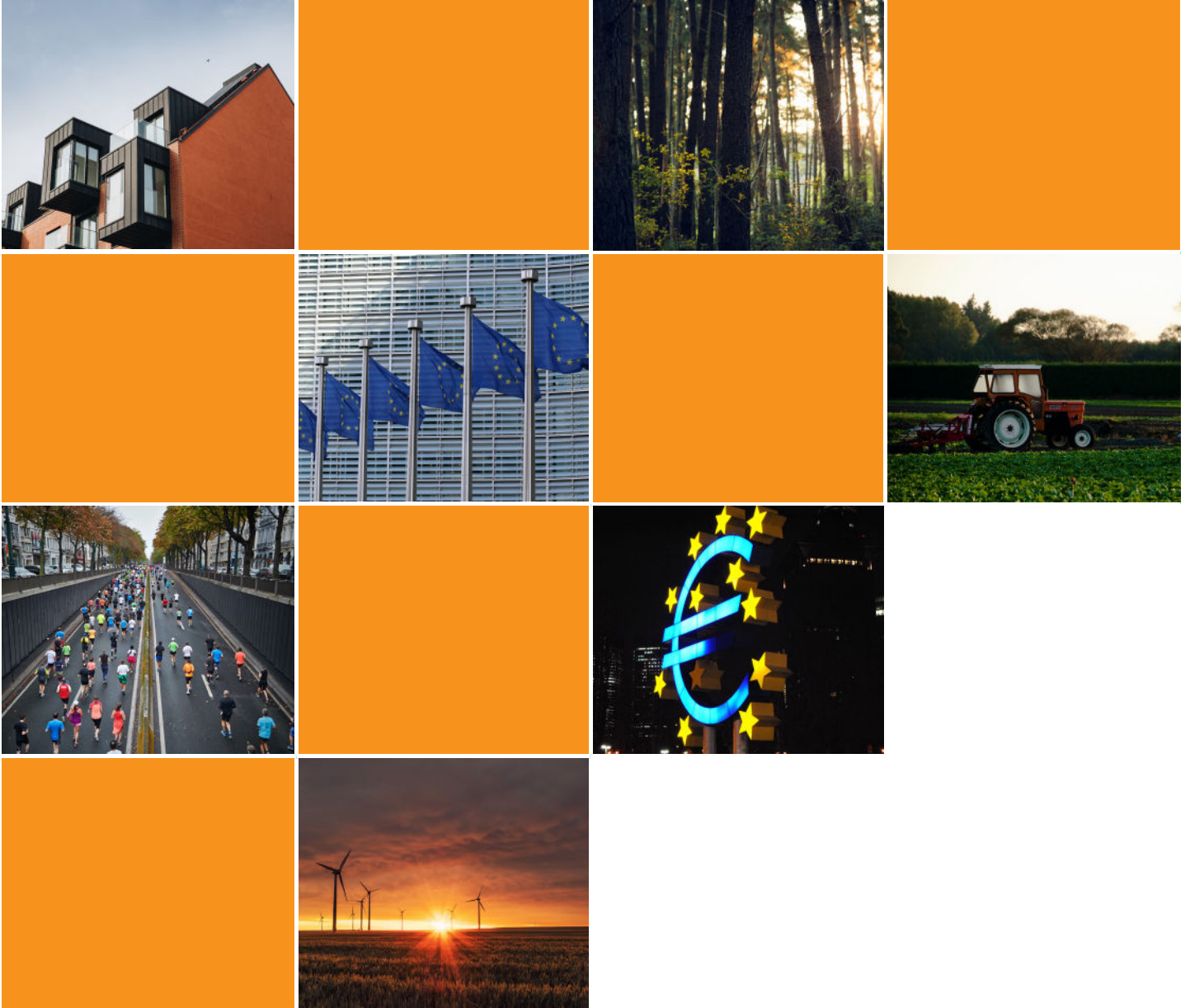
Horizon Europe overview

Horizon Europe: Preliminary structure



Commission proposal for synergies with other Union programmes





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