

Manifesto Analysis

Party of European Socialists (PES)



1. Summary



Lacking

The manifesto does not address the biggest health burden in the EU: **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**. Although there are elements targeting the protection of people's health, particularly with an environmental lens, there is a lack of emphasis on **prevention**. While recognising the key role of the **health and care workforce** during the Covid-19 crisis, no mention is made of the current shortages. Similarly, other **key current files** from this mandate are not mentioned or addressed: Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the Fit for 55 dimension of the Green Deal, Global Health Strategy, European Health Data Space nor the Pharma Package.



Insufficient to meet EU goals and commitments

The manifesto refers to the COVID-19 context, and the need to collaborate to face **cross-border health threats**. The context of **permacrisis** is hinted at, but not sufficiently addressed. Similarly, supporting **health systems** and their resilience through funding is not clearly stated as such. The question of the **health and care workforce** is insufficiently addressed. The document however provides many proposals to support workers, in terms of working conditions, skills and rights. **Digital transformation** is also tackled in general, by hinting at AI and inclusivity of digital tools. In terms of environmental policy, the question of **air pollution** is not sufficiently addressed. **One Health** is not mentioned, but elements hint to it, with mentions of the planet being "all we have" or securing the environment "and people's health". While the question of **food systems** is well-developed, it does not relate to Farm to Fork or the Sustainable Food Systems Framework.



Addressed

The manifesto hints at providing importance to **public health**, with a call for a stronger Health Union. In terms of **access to care**, the manifesto commits to quality healthcare and public services accessible by all. It also calls for security of supply in medicines, and fair pricing to prevent shortages. The manifesto refers to **research**, regarding **anti-microbial resistance (AMR)**, vaccines and rare medicines.



Addressed (cont.)

Health and equity are significantly addressed in the document, particularly the issue of energy poverty. Ending **poverty** in all its forms is quite addressed, with mentions of mobility poverty, or child poverty. The document focuses quite extensively on gender **equity** and putting an end to gender-based violence, on measures against **discrimination** in all its forms, and supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups and their inclusion.

The manifesto also hints at **just transition**, with “a Green Deal with a red heart, allying social and ecological policies”. On **climate change**, elements regarding sustainable public transport are developed, and there is a strong focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy mix. There is a strong focus on **pollution**, with the polluter pay principle, plastic and chemical pollution, and water protection. The manifesto addresses the question of **food systems**, healthy and affordable food, and food security, with a focus on farming. It also tackles the use of pesticides. Finally, the question of **mental health** is addressed, calling for a dedicated strategy.

Key proposals: European Mental Health Strategy; EU Strategy on Age Equality; European Anti-Discrimination Directive; European Plan for Affordable Housing; EU Strategy for Combatting Homelessness; fully implement the European Child Guarantee; Implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Reinforce the EU’s strategies for Gender Equality and for LGBTIQ Equality; push for the adoption of Directive on gender-based violence.



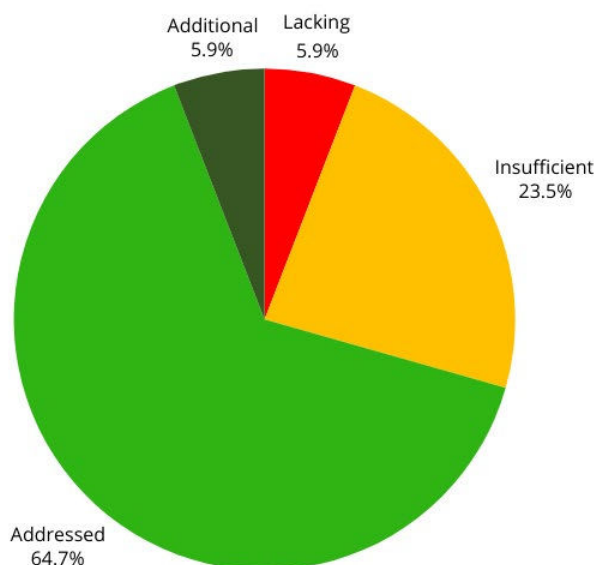
Additional relevant elements to public health

The manifesto clearly mentions **treaty changes** that would “empower the European Parliament and the European Commission with tools to safeguard our democracy, strengthen our economy, protect our environment and our social model”.

2. Focus¹

Assessing content related to health

by number of topics



Non-communicable diseases

Digital transformation
Health workforce
Resilience of health systems
Health crisis preparedness

Public health as a priority
Sustainable food systems
Antimicrobial resistance
Mental health
Health equity
Access to care
Research in health
Environment and health
Climate change adaptation/mitigation
Global and multilateral initiatives
Institutional elements

Treaty changes and institutional tools

¹ Disclaimer: this visual reflects the coverage of the 16 topics listed in the analyses. Some of the topics comprise more elements than others.

3. Analysis

Public health as a priority

Public health is not directly mentioned as a priority in the PES manifesto. However, there are many public health positive elements, such as a clear commitment to protect people with a “Europe that defends [...] their health and their environment”. Indeed, “universal access to quality health and social care” are defined as “fundamental rights” in the manifesto. Although there is no specific reference to the **health budget**, investment in “sustainable wellbeing” and the “promotion of wellbeing” are discussed. Numerous references to healthcare, wellbeing for all ages, and the desire of a **European Health Union** suggest a certain level of importance attributed to public health and health promotion. Although there is no mention of prevention in the manifesto, a preventive approach to the link between health and environment can be found throughout the text. Similarly, no explicit reference is made to a **Health in All Policies** approach, but the importance of synergy between different policies is recognised in the introductory pages where the desire of “A Europe where social, economic and environmental progress go hand in hand” is included.

These elements all support priority 1 of the Global Health Strategy² and goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³. This suggests that health will be regarded, if not as a priority, at least as an important topic for EU policymaking.

Looking at the priorities in the **EPHA manifesto**, which include “Keeping health as a top priority on the EU political agenda” and “Providing the means for an ambitious EU health policy”, the PES manifesto appears to be somewhat in line with them. All in all, health and wellbeing seem to hold a good level of priority and a central place in the Socialists’ discourse. However, plans for health policies are not supported by a plan for securing an ambitious health budget, which is a trivial element for success.

Institutional elements

The manifesto provides several elements regarding the **EU institutional setting**, and its **competences**, that could be linked to some extent to further action on public health. More specifically, the manifesto makes a significant call for a **stronger European Health Union**, particularly regarding pandemic response and cross-border cooperation, as well as national healthcare provisions. A significant mention is also made to “reforms of the EU architecture” that would be needed in the case of an **EU enlargement**, highlighting measures “to strengthen the EU’s capacity to act [...] with targeted **Treaty changes**”. Indeed, without specifically mentioning health, the manifesto hints at a stronger **role of the EU institutions** on several policy areas, mentioning that “we need to empower the European Parliament and the European Commission with tools to safeguard our democracy, strengthen our economy, protect our environment and our social model.” However, no mention is made of the **SANT committee** in the European Parliament. Finally, the manifesto makes a call to support the “crucial role of **civil society** in fostering democracy”.

These calls come in a context where enlargement and a related Treaty change could be foreseen, with several candidate countries set to join the EU. The furthering of an EU Health Union would also support the continuation of what has been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and would answer the needs to address other public health issues with a stronger European role.

While there are no direct mentions for placing public health on the agenda and supporting an ambitious European health budget, these calls are somewhat aligned with the priorities outlined by **EPHA’s manifesto**. Indeed, the latter calls for a stronger Health Union, with a SANT committee in the European Parliament, and a Vice-President of the European Commission that would focus on public health, wellbeing, and social rights. EPHA also called for a recognition of the crucial role of civil society through more sustainable financial support.

² Deliver better health and wellbeing of people across the life course.

³ Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

Sustainable food systems

The manifesto includes quite a few items on **sustainable and healthy food policy**, although mostly from a farming perspective. Topics such as **food security, healthy and affordable food**, the improvement of **food production** and the **Green Deal** are mentioned, and the link between climate and biodiversity crises and food security is highlighted. However, there is no mention of a **legislative framework for sustainable food systems**, the EU **Farm to Fork** strategy, **dietary patterns, food and alcohol labelling**, and discourse around sustainable food systems seems to be mostly centred around farming.

Many of the goals and targets included in our analytical framework are not addressed, except for goal 2 of the SDGs⁴. Others are partially addressed, such as the Farm to Fork target on reducing the use of pesticides by 50% by 2030. In the manifesto reduction of **pesticides** is mentioned, but with no specific target nor timeline. Although intentions on policies on sustainable food systems are quite positive, it is unclear how the mentioned topics will be addressed. The only means highlighted in the manifesto are the need to “embrace sustainable farming” and strengthen Europe’s sovereignty by delivering security of supply in food.

The **EPHA manifesto** includes a priority for healthy and sustainable food systems and food environments by reinforcing the EU’s common food policy with dedicated regulations and budget. It underlines the importance of resilient and sustainable food production at all levels of governance. Thus, comparing the manifestos, priorities around food systems appear to be aligned to a degree, although the PES manifesto remains quite focused on the farming aspect.

Non-Communicable Diseases

The manifesto makes no reference to **non-communicable diseases, risk factors** nor **commercial determinants of health**. The sole exception is mental health (see dedicated section below).

NCDs are, on the other hand, quite central to the **EPHA manifesto** as they represent the largest burden of ill health and early death in the EU. They are therefore intrinsically linked to the development of healthy environments, sustainable food systems and prevention in the EPHA manifesto.

Mental health

The manifesto significantly mentions **mental health** on a general level, clearly referencing the need for a “strong European Mental Health Strategy”. No mention is made of **child and youth** mental health, **suicide prevention**, nor of SDG targets. Although the manifesto does not get into the specifics of this mental health strategy, this measure could entail a long-term action plan setting mechanisms, objectives and benchmarks to monitor progress.

The **EPHA manifesto** calls for a Mental Health Strategy to be developed as an integral part of the European Health Strategy, with efforts and resources turned to strengthening mental health services, awareness campaigns and fighting stigmatisation. On this level, the EPHA and PES manifesto are aligned. However, EPHA specifically highlights the need to prioritise and facilitated access to mental health support for children, adolescents and marginalised groups, especially in times of crisis, whilst the Socialists do not.

⁴ End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Health Equity

Health equity is significantly discussed throughout the manifesto. The Socialists pledge for the continuation of the “fight for the full implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**”, which addresses topics such as healthcare, childcare and support to children, gender equality, equal opportunities, employment, fair wages, social protection, pensions, housing. Although the manifesto does not mention **data on equality**, many topics related to health equity are extensively addressed.

The topic of **discrimination** is extensively mentioned and a “zero tolerance” approach is taken around any form of prejudice. The Socialists further announce their fight to “push for the adoption of the European Anti-Discrimination Directive and the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to strengthen political and social rights for all.”

In their pursue of equality, they commit to “reinforce the **EU’s strategies for Gender Equality and for LGBTIQ Equality**”, to push for the adoption of an “**EU Strategy on Age Equality** to effectively promote the equality of all ages and to fight ageism”. The manifesto also states that the “rights of seniors – workers and pensioners alike” will be defended without bias in gender. These include, for instance, “healthcare”. Vulnerable groups occupy a notable place in their list of priorities. Furthermore, reference is made to **inequalities** within the EU’s borders, the impact of the rising cost of living, growing difficulties experienced by the younger generation, threats to democracy and the rule of law, and women’s rights. Furthermore, the manifesto affirms that environmental policies aspects of the Green Deal will be implemented leaving no one behind, allying them with social policies to achieve social justice. Reference is also made to the **Just Transition Fund** and **Social Climate Fund** and its strengthening to support new sustainable jobs. All these mentions are supportive of goal 10 of the SDGs⁵. Targets 10.2⁶ and 10.4⁷ are also addressed.

Gender equality holds a special place in the manifesto, which states that “the fight for gender equality must be reflected in all policies and budgets”. Goal 5 of the SDGs⁸, including targets 5.1⁹, 5.2¹⁰, 5.6¹¹ and 5.c¹², are significantly addressed with the intention of closing “the gender pay, care and pension gaps by 2030 with binding measures” and getting rid of gender discrimination in tax systems. Special mention is made to **employment**, with the aim of increasing employment rate among women and ensuring better work-life balance. Indeed, the manifesto includes the commitment to end **gender-based violence and discrimination**, for a “feminist Europe” in which women have equal rights and control over their lives and bodies. Especially target 5.2 of the SDGs is significantly addressed in the manifesto, with a commitment to “push for the swift adoption of the Directive on gender-based violence” to make violence against women a crime across the EU, and the support to the “yes means yes” principle. This represents an additional relevant element to our analytical framework. Furthermore, the manifesto foresees the introduction of laws to protect women from sexual harassment and exploitation, pushing “the EU and all Member States to fully implement the Istanbul Convention”. However, targets 5.4¹³ and 5.5¹⁴ of the SDGs are not mentioned, nor addressed.

Although not directly mentioned, goal 1 of the SDGs¹⁵ is significantly addressed. Indeed, the manifesto includes the commitment to “fight unemployment, poverty and social exclusion”, fighting **in-work poverty**, **energy poverty**, combating **mobility poverty** and supporting “clean, affordable and sustainable

⁵ Reduce inequality within and among countries.

⁶ By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

⁷ Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

⁸ Achieve gender equality.

⁹ End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

¹⁰ Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

¹¹ Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

¹² Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

¹³ Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

¹⁴ Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

¹⁵ End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

public transport in all regions”, eradicating **child poverty**, strengthening **child protection** and fully implementing the European Child Guarantee. Energy poverty is particularly mentioned, highlighting the issue of securing affordable and reliable energy supply for all, and making buildings more energy efficient. Furthermore, the manifesto calls for “a European Plan for Affordable Housing with related investments and an EU Strategy for Combatting Homelessness”, and commits to “the right to decent and affordable **housing** for all”. This can also be related to SDG 11.¹⁶

Everything related to health equity that is mentioned in the PES manifesto is in line with **EPHA’s priorities**. These indeed include combatting intersectional health inequalities, poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and racism to ensure equitable health outcomes. The EPHA manifesto also stresses the need for improved data collection, especially regarding the implementation and development of anti-discrimination measures.

Access to care

The manifesto addresses the topic of **access to care**. It promises “quality healthcare [...] and efficient public services accessible by all”, supportive of the second priority of the Global Health Strategy. The topic of **medicines shortages** is addressed with a commitment to “implement fair and transparent medicine pricing to prevent shortages and support timely access and innovation, including for rare diseases”. The Socialists express their will to “strengthen Europe’s sovereignty” by ensuring, among other elements, **security of supply in medicines** through investments and international trade.

However, the manifesto omits mentions of the **Pharmaceutical Package**, as well as targets 1.3¹⁷ and 10.3¹⁸ of the SDGs. Furthermore, the issue of **lack of access to care** is insufficiently addressed as the text is mainly focused on shortages of medicines and the need to ensure timely access to medicines.

The **EPHA manifesto** underlines the need for equal access to care and medicines across the EU and globally. The PES manifesto appears to be in line with this priority, although access to medicines seems to be taking slightly more space.

Digital transformation

The topic of **digital transformation** from a health point of view is insufficiently addressed in the manifesto. Indeed, there are only mentions of the digital transition on a general level, with an intention to set an “Investment Plan for the Green and Digital Transitions to create new jobs and to reindustrialise our economy and make it innovative, competitive and circular”. Although the text mentions **artificial intelligence (AI)** and the promotion of digital inclusion “via high-speed internet access and major investment in digital public infrastructure and digital education”, it is done so without specifically referring to digital health policies. Similarly, while the importance of supporting **digital skills and training** for the workforce is highlighted, no specification to the health workforce is made. Furthermore, the manifesto lacks to mention the **digital divide**, the coverage of **telemedicine** and the use of **digital health tools, health literacy, e-Health**, the **European Health Data Space** and the use and **protection of data**.

Thus, the topic is only tackled in general terms, with hints to AI and inclusivity of digital tools. This only partially aligns with the **EPHA manifesto** which calls for the promotion of digital health literacy and digital skills, the ethical use of digital health tools and data, and an inclusive digital transition. This entails facilitating epidemiology data collection, and cross-country secure data sharing in line with the European Health Data Space.

¹⁶ Targets - SDG11 - 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

¹⁷ Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

¹⁸ Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Environment and health

Environment, and the need to approach **health and environment** together, is visible throughout the text. The manifesto envisions the green transition with a **circular economy** and green jobs, reducing the environmental footprint, as well as the promotion of wellbeing. The latter hints at the 8th Environmental Action Plan (EAP)'s objective on "advancing towards a wellbeing economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes (...)"¹⁹, and living within planetary boundaries²⁰. Overall the environmental measures proposed align with a **One Health** approach, but the concept itself is not mentioned.

Moreover, the document aims at developing healthy living environments, with the goal of improving "quality of life in cities, rural areas and remote regions" through Cohesion Policy. This could refer to SDG 11.²¹

The manifesto does not address the question of **air quality** sufficiently, with no reference to the **Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD)**, only calling to "clean our air". There are similarly no mentions of **emissions**, and an insufficient reference to **clean transport**. However, other pollution issues are quite significantly addressed, for instance with the **polluter pays principle**, corresponding to the 8th EAP²². Specifically, **pollution** due to plastics and chemicals (focus on PFAS) is well addressed. Furthermore, "**sustainable water protection and management**" is also highlighted, which could refer to SDG 6²³. The text also calls for the protection of ecosystems, **biodiversity** and animal welfare, hinting at an objective from the 8th EAP²⁴.

While the two manifestos are quite aligned, the lack of focus on air pollution and emissions is a striking difference, as it is an essential element of the environmental and climate measures in the **EPHA manifesto**. However, the idea of breaking silos, approaching environment and health together, creating healthy environments are common elements.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation

Several issues relating to **climate change** are mentioned in the PES manifesto. The document focuses on the Green Deal, calling for a Green Deal "with a red heart", referring here to a **just transition** and leaving no one behind. The vision of this green transition is very socially focused, calling to break silos between social and environmental policies, with a commitment to "new quality jobs in a green, carbon-free circular economy, and a liveable planet". However, the focus of this transition insufficiently addresses **marginalised and vulnerable groups**. This is particularly so for how the transition will impact them, apart from the elements on energy (see health equity) and mobility poverty. On the latter, the manifesto calls for "clean, affordable and sustainable **public transport** in all regions, including a large railway network". This hints at several objectives and targets of the 8th EAP.²⁵

The manifesto also focuses significantly on the question of **energy**, with the goal of investing in **renewable energy** and **energy efficiency**. There is an emphasis on securing affordable and reliable energy sources for all, and reforming the energy market for price stability, which could be linked to SDG

¹⁹ Objective - 8th EAP - Art 2.2.c - Advancing towards a wellbeing economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes and accelerating the transition to a non-toxic circular economy, where growth is regenerative, resources are used efficiently and sustainably, and the waste hierarchy is applied.

²⁰ Objective - 8th EAP - Art 2.1 - The 8th EAP shall have the long-term priority objective that by 2050 at the latest, people live well, within the planetary boundaries in a wellbeing economy where nothing is wasted, growth is regenerative, climate neutrality in the Union has been achieved and inequalities have been significantly reduced (...).

²¹ SDG - 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

²² Target - 8th EAP - Art 3 - Making polluters pay: increase the share of environmental taxes in total revenues from taxes and social contributions.

²³ SDG 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

²⁴ Protecting, preserving and restoring marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the biodiversity of inland waters inside and outside protected areas by, inter alia, halting and reversing biodiversity loss and improving the state of ecosystems and their functions and the services they provide, and by improving the state of the environment, in particular air, water and soil, as well as by combating desertification and soil degradation

²⁵ Objective - 8th EAP - Art 2.2.f - Promoting environmental aspects of sustainability and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption, in particular in the areas of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system, and Target - 8th EAP - 2.2.f - Increase the share of collective transport modes (buses, coaches and trains).

7²⁶. The manifesto aims at reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and the EU 2040 climate targets. While this could support achieving the **Paris Agreement** targets, the latter is not mentioned. The document also does not mention **Fit For 55**²⁷. However, the climate measures mentioned do contribute to implementing SDG 13²⁸, and reaching the Green Deal targets.²⁹ Finally, the manifesto commits to reaching “a completely renewable and clean energy mix, securing national and European interests”, which also relates to a target of SDG 7, and several targets of the 8th EAP.³⁰

These measures are somewhat aligned with the **EPHA manifesto**, especially regarding the just transition, the energy transition and the implementation of the Green Deal. The EPHA manifesto makes the explicit link to One Health, and advances the concept of a permacrisis further. It also adds more on the impact of climate change on health, and the need for health systems to adapt.

Commitment to global and multilateral initiatives

The manifesto commits to continue the promotion of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, focusing on “peace, democracy, human rights, a feminist foreign policy, and economic and climate justice”, but does not mention the **Paris Agreement** targets. It also touches upon the issue of cross-border health threats, with mentions of AMR, “cross-border pandemic responses” and the necessary international cooperation that they require. However, while these elements support the third priority of the **Global Health Strategy**³¹, it does not mention the strategy specifically.

This corresponds somewhat to the **EPHA manifesto** recommendations, that also stress the importance of implementing the SDGs, particularly regarding environmental protection and equity, with the principle of leaving no one behind. Referencing both the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, EPHA also called for cross-sectoral policy development and synergies. Both documents call for the need to address cross-border health threats in a global context. However, EPHA’s manifesto hints at the WHO draft pandemic treaty.

Health crisis preparedness

The manifesto also obliquely references **learning from the COVID-19 pandemic**, by acknowledging that a European Health Union “that manages cross-border pandemic responses” is needed. However, it does not directly refer to preparedness. It also refers to different crises, while not linking them together as a **permacrisis**. It mentions the “successive crises and emerging threats” that the past mandate has faced since 2019, hinting at the pandemic, but also the war in Ukraine. It refers to the “climate and biodiversity crises” as a “threat to food security”.

The **EPHA manifesto** puts an emphasis on the permacrisis context, bringing all the aforementioned crises altogether, alongside socio-economic instability. It stresses that to address and prepare for them, stronger cross-border cooperation and healthy environments need to be fostered, health systems strengthened, learning the lessons from COVID-19. It also stresses that preparedness policies need to take into account that crises exacerbate inequities, calling for policies that leave no one behind.

²⁶ SDG7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

²⁷ Fit for 55 Package.

²⁸ Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

²⁹ Green Deal: 42.5% renewable energy target by 2030; Green Deal - 11.7% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

³⁰ SDG7 - 7.2: By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, link Indicator - 8th EAP - 2.2.f - Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (in %); Target - 8th EAP - 2.2.f - At least 42.5% of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption by 2030

³¹ Prevent and Combat health threats, including pandemics, applying a One Health approach.

Resilience of health systems

While the PES manifesto stresses that “Well-funded public services provide security against the hardships of life, promote wellbeing, and are essential for the functioning of our economy.”, it does not clearly mention the **need to strengthen health systems**. However, as previously highlighted, it calls for a stronger Health Union, which could be viewed as supportive. Furthermore, wellbeing is mentioned on several occasions.

The **EPHA manifesto** calls more specifically for a strengthening of health systems, particularly through a dedicated and ambitious EU health budget, stressing that health is an investment, not a cost. Linking to the concept of the wellbeing economy, the EPHA manifesto highlights that preventing ill health through health protection, health-enabling environments, and primary care, will develop healthier and more resilient societies and economies. To strengthen health systems, the health and care workforce crisis should also be addressed.

Health workforce

The PES manifesto highlights the key role played by the health and care workforce during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, stressing “the essential contribution of the care sector to society, including hospitals, doctors, and nurses”. Furthermore, the manifesto commits to “defend public healthcare that creates quality jobs”.

However, the document insufficiently covers the topic of the **health and care workforce**. The questions of the **shortages** and the **medical deserts** that EU Member States are facing are not addressed. The manifesto then places a strong emphasis on the question of **workers’ rights**, without targeting a specific sector. The document calls for the right to quality jobs, fair wages, guaranteeing workers and trade union rights and strengthening democracy at work through European Work Councils. It also proposes a “Roadmap for Quality Work and Well-paid Jobs”, and to strengthen the European Labour Authority. It also commits to supporting the International Labour Organisation in the promotion of workers’ rights, and to adopting and implementing the Platform Workers’ Directive. PES also calls for workers to be protected during **crises**. Finally, the issue of adapting **skills** to the climate challenge and digitalisation is also addressed.

The workers’ measures proposed will provide elements supporting the health and care workforce in the challenges they are facing, for instance on the working conditions and the skills needs. However, more targeted measures are also needed to fully grasp those challenges and reflect the urgency of the situation. The challenges of the workforce are often referred to as a “ticking time bomb”, and the issue has gained momentum on the EU political agenda, with the Bucharest Declaration and the current Belgian Presidency of the Council.

On this matter, the **EPHA manifesto** has focused on addressing the shortages and medical deserts issues, calling it a priority for the next mandate. Measures would include tools for long-term planning, guidelines on mobility, and improving working conditions, particularly on the workers’ health and mental health, which joins the messages of the PES manifesto. EPHA also calls for investments in education and continuous professional development, meeting to point on skills needs.

Antimicrobial resistance

The manifesto points out the intention to “support initiatives for common European public research on [...] **antimicrobial resistance**”. However, the topic is only lightly addressed, and a **One Health** approach is not explicitly mentioned.

Concerning goals and targets, the **Farm to Fork** target to “reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030” is not addressed. Indeed, the Socialists’ discourse revolves much around **research** on antimicrobial resistance, leaving out a concrete strategy to tackle it.

The **EPHA manifesto** calls on all involved sectors to actively collaborate and lead in the global fight against antimicrobial resistance through a One Health approach. The PES manifesto partially addresses this, focusing solely on the research aspect.

Research in health

On the topic of **research**, the manifesto only mentions support to “initiatives for common European public research”, related to public health issues. However, it remains limited to vaccines, lifesaving medicines and AMR. While the call hints to publicly funded initiatives, the manifesto does not mention the **Horizon Europe** programme, or other funding measures for research. It does not make further references to research in general.

Research and innovation are key assets in the context of multicrisis that the EU is facing, and on advancing on the fight against health threats, NCDs and more. There is a need for stronger measures in that regard.

In its manifesto, **EPHA** has called for stronger support to research on several aspects. As an overarching element, EPHA calls for a comprehensive European Health Strategy, that would comprise research and innovation elements. Priority 5 also focuses on the need to secure capacity for resilience and create healthy environments, particularly in the permacrisis context. For that, the promotion of health-focused research and innovation is paramount. More specifically, and a common point with the PES manifesto, EPHA calls for funding to be allocated to research initiatives seeking to understand the mechanisms of AMR, developing new antibiotics, diagnostics, and therapies, and finding innovative solutions to mitigate the impact of AMR. As for medicines, it is as well a common point. However, as highlighted above, the PES manifesto does not link it to the Pharma Package, which has been a crucial file in the last months of the current mandate.

4. Conclusions

The manifesto mentions several of the key topics analysed, with a strong focus on equity, gender equity and anti-discrimination. The document has a strong social approach, with a focus on workers’ rights and wellbeing. However, the question of health and care workforce shortages is not addressed. Environmental measures are also well-developed, as well as several elements on energy, food security and climate change. AMR and cross-border health threats are addressed, to some extent, as well as preparedness for future (health) crises. The manifesto fails to address NCDs, even though the latter are a key and growing health issue to be tackled in the next mandate, following the first steps made with Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan. However, mental health is well addressed. A final highlight would be a call to further the EU’s competences in terms of environmental and social policies through a treaty change.



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