EPHA strategy 2026 - 2030

european public health alliance

About EPHA

EPHA is a change agent – Europe's leading civil society alliance advocating for better health. As a member-led international non-profit association (AISBL), we bring together public health organisations, patient and disease groups, health professionals, academics, and other civil society actors to strengthen the voice of public health and advance health and wellbeing across Europe.

At a glance

Health is the foundation of Europe's prosperity, cohesion, and democracy. It allows people to thrive, communities to flourish, and societies to advance. **Yet today, health is too often treated as secondary**, overshadowed by economic and security agendas, strained by climate and digital transitions, and challenged by shrinking civic space.

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) exists to change this. For more than 30 years, we have connected civil society organisations across Europe to put health and equity at the centre of policymaking. Our strength lies in bringing people together - convening, amplifying, and enabling collaboration that turns evidence into action.

Our strategic framework

EPHA's **vision** is a **world where everyone's health and wellbeing are a priority.**

Our mission is to **connect people, evidence, and policy to advance health and wellbeing for all in Europe**. As Europe's leading civil society alliance in public health, EPHA's **ambition** for 2026–2030 is to **remain a trusted, independent force for change**.

Over the next five years, EPHA will focus on **three strategic objectives**:

Strategic objective 1

Make health a political and cross-cutting priority in Europe

Strategic objective 2

Strengthen the collective power of health civil society

Strategic objective 3

Defend the integrity of policymaking through democracy, independence, and evidence

At a glance

How we work

We deliver impact by combining three core strengths:

Advocacy & influence
Shaping policy with independent evidence and lived realities

Platform & partnerships
Mobilising members and allies to collaborate and drive change

Visibility & communications
Amplifying voices and reframing narratives for healthier societies

This work is reinforced by cross-cutting efforts on **resource mobilisation, foresight, member engagement,** and **continuous learning.**

Where we focus

To make the best use of our collective energy, **EPHA's thematic priorities for 2026–2030** are:

Determinants of health
Tackling inequities and confronting health-harming industries while advancing prevention, community-based care, and mental health

Planetary and One Health
Linking human, animal, and environmental health to address the climate and ecological crises, including antimicrobial resistance

Democracy and civic space
Safeguarding evidence-based policymaking, countering misinformation, and defending civil society's role in Europe's democratic life

From words to actions

This strategy is backed by an implementation plan that sets milestones, tracks progress, and adapts annually to match the needs of a changing ecosystem and evolving organisation. It ensures that our ambitions remain grounded, our members empowered, and our alliance resilient.

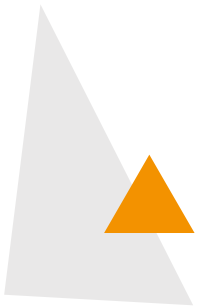
Our vision and mission: why EPHA matters

Health is the foundation of a fair, resilient, and sustainable Europe. Yet today, that foundation is at risk.

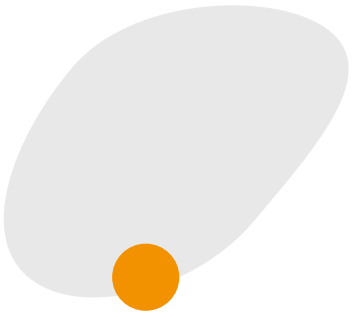
EPHA's **vision** is a **world where everyone's health and wellbeing are a priority**.

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A changing landscape: challenges and opportunities for health

A changing world requires strategic adaptation

EPHA enters its **new strategic cycle** with over three decades of experience as Europe's leading civil society alliance in public health. **Our strength** lies in **convening diverse actors, amplifying collective expertise,** and **advocating for policies that put population health and equity at the heart of European decision making**.

This 2026–2030 strategy is a **deliberate repositioning in response to a fast-changing world**. The past few years have shown how quickly health can move from the margins to the centre of political attention: pandemics, geopolitical uncertainty and military conflicts, digital disruption, ecological breakdown, and the erosion of civic space have reshaped Europe's reality.

These pressures demand systemic, proactive, and inclusive approaches – and a strong, independent voice from civil society to ensure health is seen as the foundation of Europe's future.

A new political context for public health in Europe

The current European Commission mandate (2024–2029) reflects **shifting political priorities**. Health, once prominent during the pandemic and the creation of the European Health Union, now risks being sidelined in favour of economic and security agendas.

Still, **health remains indispensable to achieving the EU's wider ambitions**. Through a combination of horizon scanning, a desk review and existing evidence, and a series of structured consultations with our members, expert advisors and staff, we captured a broad spectrum of perspectives that reflect the current realities across the sector. Several shared reflections emerged from this process, that now anchor this strategy.

We affirm that a **competitive and resilient Europe** depends on a healthy population and workforce.

We recognise that **reducing inequities** requires strong public health and social protection systems.

We agree that **environmental sustainability** is unattainable without fully embedding health in climate, agriculture, and food policy.

And we conclude that defending **democracy and European values** calls for inclusive decision-making and a thriving civic space, where civil society safeguards transparency and equity.

In this landscape, EPHA's role as an independent, visible, and strategic civil society alliance is vital to ensure health is integrated across all policies.

Emerging and reaffirmed public health priorities

Societal transformations are reshaping the health landscape and intensifying both old and new challenges: These challenges underscore the need for cross-cutting, anticipatory action that addresses the root causes of ill-health and ensures no community is left behind.

Demographics and care

Europe's ageing population increases the demand for long-term care, integrated services, and age-friendly environments.

Planetary and ecological crises

Climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, displacement, and the spread of vector-borne diseases threaten physical and mental health.

Digital transformation

Innovations like artificial intelligence and e-health bring opportunities for prevention and care, but raise concerns around equity, privacy, access, and wellbeing.

Health security

From antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to pandemic preparedness and disaster response, resilient systems and public trust are more urgent than ever.

NCDs and inequities

Noncommunicable diseases remain region's largest killer (responsible for 90% of deaths), compounded by rising mental health needs and deepening inequities driven by economic hardship, exclusion, and persistent influence of health-harming industries (tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed foods, fossil fuels).

Responding to internal catalysts for change

This strategy also reflects EPHA's internal learnings. The 2021–2025 Strategy strengthened our partnerships and profile, but highlighted the need for **clearer outcomes, stronger membership engagement,** and **better use of monitoring and evaluation**. Navigating years of disruption reaffirmed the value of **transparent governance, resilient systems,** and **supportive organisational culture**.

At the same time, **cuts to EU operating grants** and **changing donor priorities** have placed health civil society under pressure, forcing difficult adjustments across the sector. For EPHA, this means **calibrating ambition to realistic capacities**, while **staying true to our mission and independence**.

Members, however, are not stepping back. They are reaffirming their commitment to EPHA's values, and asking for **greater co-ownership, sharper strategic focus,** and **more effective ways of working together**. This strategy answers their calls, harnessing the collective strengths of the network to reinforce our shared purpose and impact.

Positioning EPHA for greater resilience and impact

This strategy renews EPHA's commitment to what we stand for and how we work. Our **goal** is to remain **agile, relevant,** and **effective** in defending health as both a political priority and democratic right in Europe's evolving landscape.

EPHA will continue to strengthen its position as a **policy actor** influencing decisions that shape health, a **platform for collaboration** that mobilises different expertise, and a **community for learning and impact** across the European public health field.

By doing so, EPHA reinforces its **unique role as an independent civil society alliance** at the heart of the Europe's health debate.

Our theory of change: from solidarity to impact

Health is the foundation of a thriving Europe, yet it is too often sidelined in policy and undercut by shrinking civic space. Fragmented, short-term responses cannot meet today's challenges. What is needed is leadership rooted in solidarity, shared responsibility, and long-term, systemic thinking.

EPHA sees health not as a cost, but as a public good, anchored in resilience, equity, democracy, and planetary responsibility. Advancing it requires **cross-sectoral strategies** that address root causes of ill health, **co-creation with expert and affected communities** rather than passive representation, and a shift from reactive responses to **anticipatory leadership**.

EPHA's distinctive role is to convene, amplify, and enable. We believe better health outcomes for health and well-being come from tackling structural determinants through collective action and strategic influence – not polarisation.

To bridge the growing gap between escalating public challenges and shrinking civic space, EPHA acts on two interconnected **levels**:

Direct influence – shaping a public health discourse that protects the public good, generating and disseminating independent scientific evidence, and ensuring evidence uptake in policy.

Collective mobilisation – empowering members and partners, building capacity, and amplifying their voices for greater impact.

We integrate new tools and methods to expand the reach, efficiency, and evidence base, while keeping human values, expertise, and strategic judgement at the centre. Recognising that health is inseparable from socioeconomic, political, commercial, and environmental determinants, EPHA embraces **comprehensive, transdisciplinary frameworks** like *One Health* and *Planetary Health*. This approach helps us to **move beyond silos** and promote collaboration. In doing so, **EPHA** contributes with a systems approach to a European public health ecosystem, where civil society is well-equipped and meaningfully included, policies serve people and communities, and health and wellbeing are recognised as essential to sustainable development and democratic governance.

Strategic objectives 2026-2030

To turn vision into action, EPHA has defined **three Strategic Objectives**. They are not ends in themselves, but levers for impact, guiding how we prioritise, collaborate, and mobilise over the next five years.

Acting to deliver on these strategic objectives will allow us to play our part in ensuring that health is recognised and acted upon as a foundation for Europe's future.

Strategic objective 1

Make health a political and cross-cutting priority in Europe

Strategic objective 2

Strengthen the collective power of health civil society

Strategic objective 3

Defend the integrity of policy-making through democracy, independence, and evidence

How we work: EPHA's activity model

EPHA's impact comes from a set of **interconnected activities**. These reflect our strengths as a **policy actor, convener, and membership platform**, and ensure we remain agile, anticipatory, and inclusive in a changing landscape.

Core streams

Advocacy & influence

Develop evidence-based recommendations and health promoting narratives

Carry out targeted advocacy, consultations, and campaigns reflecting members realities

Build strategic alliances with actors across and beyond public health

Visibility & communication

Shape narratives that support impactful advocacy and policy change

Disseminate evidence, insights, and member perspectives

Increase recognition of EPHA and its members in EU policy spaces

Platform & partnerships

Facilitate thematic networks, hubs and taskforces

Mobilise members and partners for joint projects and action on priority policy dossiers

Convene dialogues and exchanges to connect evidence with policy

Cross-cutting streams

Sustainability & resources

- Diversify organisational funding to retain independence and agility
- Partner with actors advancing health equity and public interest
- Promote financial sustainability across the network

Member engagement & co-creation

- Support members through on-boarding, capacity-building, and empowerment
- Ensure transparent governance, and democratic decision making
- Provide responsive support and continuity of operations

Intelligence & foresight

- Scan policy and societal trends to anticipate risks and opportunities
- Use foresight to inform strategy and action
- Keep members ahead of the curve on emerging issues

Learning & adaptation

- Capture lessons from advocacy and share them back with members
- Create feedback loops that strengthen our collective impact
- Integrate adaptive learning into strategic cycles

Where we focus: thematic compass

EPHA's thematic priorities are selected to focus our energy where it matters most, while leaving space to respond to new and emerging challenges. Choices will be guided by a **thematic compass** that will help us work strategically while remaining agile. The thematic compass is built upon "three Cs":

Context Urgent health threats and relevant policy developments

Capacity The expertise and resources available within EPHA

Community The strengths, interests and potential for collaboration across our members and partners

Determinants of health

Health is profoundly shaped by social conditions, political, digital and built environments, and the influence of powerful commercial actors. Acting on these root causes is key to protecting rights, driving down inequities and shaping healthier societies. We will:

- Tackle the drivers of health inequities and exclusion
- Confront health harming industries (tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy food, fossil fuels) and their influence on policy
- Promote access to prevention and community-based care
- Advance policies that integrate Health in All Policies and address physical and mental health and wellbeing across the life course

Planetary Health and One Health

The triple planetary crisis - climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss - is a defining health challenge of our time. Human, animal and environmental health are interconnected, and solutions must reflect this reality. We will:

- Advocate for climate and health co-benefits in EU and national climate, agriculture, and food policies
- Promote One Health and Planetary Health frameworks
- Address AMR as an ecological, social, and public health threat
- Act as a bridge between health and environmental justice movements

Safeguarding democracy, civic space and evidence-based public health governance

Democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space are eroding trust and weakening public health action. EPHA's watchdog role is key to defend accountable policymaking and a thriving civic space, and ensuring evidence and rights remain at the core of Europe's health governance. We will:

- Defend an open, transparent, and inclusive civic space
- Promote participatory, rights-based approaches to health governance
- Position health as a pillar of Europe's social model and democracy
- Defend transparent, evidence-based health policymaking
- Counter misinformation, polarisation, and declining public trust

From strategy to delivery

Implementation plan & operational commitments

This strategy sets the organisational direction, and a dedicated implementation plan has been developed to translate it into tangible outcomes. The plan sets milestones and indicators for each strategic objective, strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems. It also ensures transparent governance and accountability to members, while allowing to align resources with key priorities as they evolve. It is reviewed and adjusted annually to stay responsive to changing circumstances, keeping the strategy dynamic.

To make this strategy work in practice, EPHA sets itself a number of **operational commitments** for the coming years. We will:

- Achieve a financially stable organisation and diversified funding base
- Strengthen internal operations and organisational capacity to deliver strategic priorities
- Consolidate external partnerships, visibility, and positioning
- Strengthen membership engagement, governance, and organisational alignment
- Enhance strategic intelligence and advocacy impact

These commitments guide how the implementation plan is designed and reviewed each year, ensuring that EPHA remains resilient, member-driven, and effective in advancing health and equity.

Looking ahead

This strategy is both a plan for EPHA and a call to action for all who believe in a fairer, healthier, and more democratic Europe to roll up their sleeves and get involved. The challenges are immense, but so too is the power of collective action - and it is by working together across sectors, communities, and borders that we can ensure that Europe's future is a healthy one.

EPHA stands ready to convene, amplify, and enable this shared effort. With the commitment of our members, the trust of our partners, and the engagement of new allies, **we will keep health where it belongs: at the centre of Europe's story**.

