

The patient community's priorities for the 2024 EU4Health Work Programme and beyond

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The European Patients' Forum (EPF) calls for a **patient-centred EU4Health 2024 work programme**, with actions to **empower patients in healthcare** and **foster their participation** throughout the five overarching strands to be funded under the 2024 EU4Health Work Programme.

With an investment of EUR 5.3 billion during 2021-27, the EU4Health programme is a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the post-COVID-19 recovery and build stronger, patient-centred health systems that can deliver for all in all circumstances. Synergies between the EU4Health programme and other EU spending programmes are also needed to ensure an **integrated approach to health**, in particular with social and environmental policies and programmes.

EPF has identified three areas where we would like to see stronger action:

Sustainable, accessible and transparent funding scheme for patients and civil society organisations

A **sustainable, accessible and transparent funding scheme** such as Operating Grants is essential to ensure that patients' organisations and broader civil society can play their role in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the health programme and other European legislation. This scheme has to enable and empower patient organisations to build and sustain continuous and independent operation.

Patients' organisations, together with other civil society health organisations, are a **key resource in shaping health policy at national and European levels**. Patients' organisations channel the voice of patients by representing their communities' interests and helping policymakers to understand their lived experiences, thereby achieving more relevant and effective policies. They also provide services, education, information, and capacity-building.

Capacity-building programmes for patient participation in EU and national health policies

A sustainable funding system must also be accompanied by **capacity-building programmes for patient organisations** to ensure their meaningful participation in European, national, and regional health policies.

Supporting evidence-based policies that reflect and address patients' needs requires the active participation of patients and their representative organisations in expert groups and advisory bodies. This means that patients must have the necessary awareness of policy processes, training, and resources to participate in these groups. At national level, more patient involvement to support the cooperation between Member States and the further development of European reference networks is needed. We call for the development of **good practices in consulting and involving the patient community in a meaningful way as well as increased support for capacity-building programmes for patients**.

Substantial investment in health literacy and patient information

EPF calls for **substantial investment to improve health literacy**, including digital health literacy. Health literacy fosters access to health and puts citizens and patients at the centre of health and healthcare. Well-informed patients are not only an asset to society, but also a **prerequisite for the implementation of many EU health policies**. A higher, more equitable level of digital health literacy, for example, would be necessary to fully exploit the potential of the European Health Data Space across all member states and patient communities. Increased public awareness of the risks associated with the misuse of antibiotics would also support the fight against antimicrobial resistance.