



EUROPEAN HEALTH & WELL-BEING DEAL



**All Policies for
a Healthy Europe**
Improving citizens' well-being

Foreword from our Chair, Former Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis

Since our coalition published its 2019 manifesto, the world has changed in ways which require an approach to policy that keeps the **interests of EU citizens at its core**. A global pandemic, a war on our continent, a food and energy crisis, and the worsening reality of climate change have forced a paradigm shift in the response expected by EU citizens. As the European Parliament elections approach, we stand at a crucial juncture in shaping the future of the Union, a future in which EU policy will be judged by citizens for its impact on their well-being.

Indeed, in our everyday lives our well-being is directly affected by how our work is regulated, our environment protected, our urban environments organised, how affordable healthcare is to our people, and how innovation and technological developments are harnessed. This manifesto calls for **steps towards well-being economies ensuring healthier lifestyles**, encompassing physical, mental, nutritional, environmental, social, and economic well-being, and guaranteeing universal health coverage for all.

Universal health coverage is an important pillar to **ensure health for all in all EU countries**; and is a foundation for healthy people, societies, and economies, thus enhancing Member States' resilience in times of health emergencies. Investment in primary health care is therefore critical for both universal health coverage and health security of all our societies.

It is crucial to recognise that **investing in health and well-being is not merely a cost but a long-term investment in our society and economy**. We support the European Commission's initiative to build a stronger European Health Union; our European Health and Wellbeing Deal is based on a **health in all policies approach** and can help to strengthen all efforts to achieve this goal.

Healthier populations bring about social and economic benefits across sectors, contributing to increased social cohesion and economic prosperity. With the EU leading the way, **the health for all policies rationale can be instilled into more sectors of the economy**.



Implementing this vision requires a **comprehensive framework** that can support this transformation. One that implements the necessary institutional and policy evolution within the European Union to **effectively streamline health and well-being throughout all policies**. One that systematically assesses the potential health impacts of EU policies and lays out solutions to overcome current and future challenges and **build a future that safeguards citizens' health and well-being**. This manifesto sets out to deliver just that; and is what we call the *“European Health and Well-being Deal”*.

Friends and colleagues, let us embark on this transformative journey together and shape a **Europe that truly values the health and well-being of its people**.

Find out more about
our campaign here:



“ **It is crucial to recognise that investing in health and well-being is not merely a cost but a long-term investment in our society and economy.** ”

Introduction

With a new mandate approaching, the European Union is faced with a pressing need to demonstrate to citizens that it can prioritise their health in its policymaking. It is crucial that the EU restate its commitment to the well-being of its constituents who, polls show, consider public health a top priority for the EU to act upon¹.

The “European Health and Well-being Deal” emerges as a pragmatic call for a strategic pivot towards health and well-being, echoing calls from citizens at the Conference on the Future of Europe². The aim is clear: to infuse well-being and health considerations into the very fabric of EU policies, ensuring they don’t remain isolated topics but rather form the cornerstone of decision-making processes.

Central to the “European Health and Well-being Deal” is the “health in all policies” principle which emphasises the interconnectedness of health with other policy areas and the advantages that health-conscious policies can bring to public life. This manifesto goes a step further, focusing not only on improving health outcomes but fostering a holistic societal well-being that transcends conventional boundaries.

More than just a policy proposal, this is a call to action grounded in pragmatism. It acknowledges the imperative for the European Union to demonstrate its responsiveness to citizens’ concerns by prioritising health. In an era still marred by Euroscepticism, this manifesto signifies a proactive step the EU can take towards aligning democratic principles with health-centred policies.

We are calling for measured change, ensuring citizens are heard and their health and well-being is safeguarded through changes to the EU’s institutional makeup and progress in key policy areas.





EU Institutional Reforms

Well-being as a structural consideration

Widely recognised for its potential to transform policy outcomes for citizens, it's time the Health in All Policies approach be applied fully and effectively within the institutional structure of the European Union. To achieve this, both leadership and coordination on health and well-being are crucial, starting with establishing a Vice-President for One Health in the Commission.

To carry out objectives set by the new Vice-President throughout future mandates, a strong policy infrastructure on health and well-being must be put in place. Bodies should be established within existing structures to contribute to health and well-being outcomes horizontally, supporting coordination and monitoring implementation.

Recommendation

Commission

- Establish a **European Commission Vice-Presidency for One Health** to oversee and ensure the systematic integration of health and well-being into various policy areas in line with the Health in All Policies approach.
- Establish a **Health in All Policies Task Force within the Secretariat General** which would work closely with the different DGs to ensure that well-being and health are taken into consideration in every context and at every stage.

European Parliament

- Establish a **standing Committee for Health** to ensure a focus on new public health policy and the follow-up of the different files launched during this mandate.
- Establish a **Health in All Policies Task Force** under the remit of the Committee for Health, collaborating with the different parliamentary committees to raise awareness about the co-benefits of health and well-being initiatives in other sectors.
- Create an **“Intergroup for Health and Well-being in All Policies”** to further ensure an intersectoral approach. This intergroup would serve as a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy across different policy areas with a range of stakeholders.

Well-being throughout the legislative process

Currently, the extent to which health and well-being are incorporated into policy development and decision-making varies significantly across different EU policies. EU policymakers often draft and vote on policies without considering opportunities for improving health and well-being. To address this gap, it is imperative that we implement a comprehensive framework to systematically assess potential positive and negative well-being and health impacts. This will allow policymakers to make informed decisions that prioritise the well-being of citizens and mitigate potential adverse effects on public health.

Recommendation

- Introduce **systematic Well-being and Health Impacts Assessments (WHIAs)** for all EU policies. These WHIAs would systematically evaluate the potential positive and negative impacts of proposed policies on public health. WHIAs should assess both the aggregate impact of the assessed policy on the health of a population but also on the distribution of the impact within the population, in terms of gender, age, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status. WHIAs should consider short-term but also long-term and direct impacts.
- Develop **Well-being and Health Impact Assessments guidelines** to facilitate the implementation of WHIAs and ensure their consistency and quality. These should be made available to stakeholders involved in the policy process, as well as to Member States, and should provide guidance on best practices, methodologies, and data sources for conducting WHIAs.

CASE STUDY

WHO: Enabling the implementation of health impact assessment in Portugal³

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has successfully supported the implementation of health impact assessments in Portugal. Through capacity building and technical assistance, the WHO has helped Portugal establish a robust framework for conducting HIAs across various policy areas. This case study serves as a valuable example of how HIAs can be effectively integrated into the legislative process, promoting evidence-based decision-making and fostering the well-being of the population.

Well-being as a culture

Recognising the horizontal significance of well-being, it is essential to provide policymakers, civil servants, and other stakeholders with the necessary resources to effectively implement the Health in All Policies approach. Currently, there is a significant gap in terms of training on the Health in All Policies approach within the EU institutions. To ensure that it becomes a common practice rather than a buzzword within the institutions, it is essential to create a sustainable framework allowing the integration of health and well-being in the culture of the European Union, providing policymakers and stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Recommendation

- **Establish training programmes on Health in All Policies** for policymakers, civil servants, and other stakeholders that provide an overview of the Health in All Policies approach, its key principles, examples of co-benefits, as well as guidance on how to conduct health impact assessments and integrate health considerations into policy development.



Policy Recommendations

Unlocking improved well-being and healthy lifestyles for citizens everyday

Healthy lifestyles

Resources available for promoting well-being and health literacy are insufficient in the EU, where at least one in three people may not be able to understand essential health-related material⁴. Until now, citizens have had to rely on ad-hoc tools such as front-of-pack labelling, which are supported by educational and promotional campaigns⁵.

However, citizens deserve a more comprehensive understanding to enable them to make better informed choices. Health and well-being literacy requires an understanding of health and well-being determinants, which, in combination with equal access to healthy lifestyles for all, could yield broader social benefits⁶, and provide the foundations for a true culture of well-being for citizens.

Recommendation

- **Adopt a European well-being and health literacy strategy** in line with the WHO recommendations for health literacy⁷, digital literacy⁸ and the Regional Digital Health Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2023-2030⁹.

This plan should be comprehensive in the:
 - ✓ scope of **factors affecting health and well-being** covered (including nutrition, health and mental health, physical activity, environment, digitisation, lifelong learning, working environment);
 - ✓ set of **actions** outlined (including digital toolkits, support for Member State initiatives, further research and ensuring sufficient funding).
- The Commission should adopt a co-creative approach when building this strategy and ensure its implementation through **partnerships for transmission between education and training actors and networks** (schools, universities, teachers, sports stakeholders, employers and ministries of education, health, and employment) ensuring communication that is adapted to the targeted audience.

Equitable food policy

Landmark and long-awaited initiatives of the Farm-to-Fork strategy, adopted in May 2020, are still pending (e.g., the adoption of nutrient profiles and resulting restriction of health claims for products high in sugar, fat, and salt), despite new elements of context adding to the pressure of climate change. More than ever, the EU must enable for a European food environment¹⁰ that makes **healthy and nutritious food the obvious and easy choice** through accessible, affordable, and healthy and nutritious food for citizens, as recommended by the Conference on the Future of Europe¹¹.

Recommendation

- Adopt **minimum quality legal requirements** that make food products healthier by design (e.g., establishing nutrients content), building upon initiatives taken at both national¹² and European level¹³, and other contributing measures supporting accessibility to healthy food overall.
- Encourage citizens to make healthy choices with adequate legislation (implementation of Farm-to-Fork initiatives e.g., adoption of **nutrient profiles** and **restriction of health claims**) and promotion strategies.
- Promote a circular economy in the food sector to optimise the use of resources, reduce waste, and foster recycling and reuse.



Healthy living environments

The environment citizens live, work, and relax in everyday is an important determinant of their well-being, beyond potentially grave health consequences such as cardiovascular diseases or reduced brain developments. Building on existing initiatives to improve the quality of these environments, further action must be taken to deliver safe, inclusive, healthy, and pollution-free (noise, light, water, air including indoor air pollution, hazardous waste) living environments and cities supported by safe housing, accessible public spaces and green mobility, and well-being at work.

Recommendation

- **Prioritise the adoption and implementation of ambitious legislation** on pollution¹⁴, addressing reduction of emissions at source as well as local green, well-being, and health initiatives (e.g., in the health care sector¹⁵, and in encouraging physical activity). The latter can be achieved by increasing funding directed towards cities (regional funds), sharing strong best-practice evidence-based communication actions to improve citizen awareness of pollution, and boosting adoption of preventive actions.
- **Leverage the European New Bauhaus** to advance reflection on indoor¹⁶ and outdoor living environments and well-being, as well as increase financial support for innovative programs, and create a **partnership for well-being and health** as part of the Urban agenda for the EU.

- **Enhance collaboration with partners** such as the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, Open and Agile Smart Cities, Eurocities and other initiatives, and support collaborative initiatives with local level impact (e.g., SHARE initiative on awareness raising on the role of sport and physical activity in the context of regional and local development)¹⁷.
- Recognise and address **work-related psychosocial risks** by adopting dedicated **legislation with a comprehensive scope which is sensitive to underserved regions and urban/rural inequalities**. Further advance citizens' health and well-being at work by developing a **health and well-being at work European toolkit** to guide businesses in moving from project-based solutions towards an integrated and comprehensive approach to health and well-being investment in employees.

Digital empowerment

The digital environment can be a catalyst in enhancing innovation for scale and delivering better outcomes of citizens' health and well-being. Harnessing the opportunities offered by data and AI can transform them into powerful tools for health & care professionals as well as for use by citizens. However, a major challenge in unlocking the power of these resources is the question of how we achieve a culture of collaborative data access and sharing, empowering citizens and stakeholders. The First Report on the State of the Digital Decade¹⁸ shows that many Member States are well positioned to achieve full digitalisation of public services and access to health records for their citizens, but significant investments are still needed to improve the cross-border availability and performance of public services, enabled by digitalisation.



Recommendation

- Develop **strategies for digital/data literacy and upskilling**¹⁹ medical professionals and citizens drawing inspiration from existing initiatives²⁰ that address current and potential skills shortages through digital solutions and in response to rapidly changing technological environments.
- Establish a **European Health Data Space Virtual Centre**²¹ or bringing together research and application to develop best practices and recommendations in partnership with academia, government, and industry. It should address critical areas such as data security and ethics, digital/data literacy, patient participation, AI and innovation.
- Propose fit for purpose **legislation addressing the urgent need for modernisation of our health systems**. Prioritising digital inclusivity and connectivity, it should aim to make health systems more resilient and secure while further accelerating Europe's digital transformation.

Well-being and health proofing citizens' future by building resilient & forward-looking societies

Making the case for prevention and implementing a preventive approach

Reports and studies have demonstrated the cost to society of non-preventive action. However, they often focus on targeted measures and specific examples²², thus failing to capture cascade effects and the real benefits of a systemic preventive approach with well-being and health at its core. This can affect the quality of decision making without adequate assessment of the costs and benefits of preventive measures. It is now critical to make the case for a paradigm shift towards prevention.

Recommendation

- Create a **European Hub for preventive policies** gathering experts from across sectors and European agencies to develop a comprehensive overview of systemic risks (e.g., resilience of agricultural, food, energy, water, air quality and healthcare systems), assess benefits of a systemic preventive approach, formulate recommendations, and develop toolkits to implement shifts at all levels of governance and a more whole-systems approach.
- Consider **well-being and healthcare expenditure as an investment** to facilitate an increased focus on activities supporting disease prevention (e.g., physical activity²³), early detection of illness and population health management (e.g., through digitalisation and secondary use of data for public health policies), promoting better access to quality treatment and innovative medicines for patients with rare diseases and building capacities to implement main goals of the European Health Union. It is also of the utmost importance to strengthen the work of the European Reference Networks for patients, suffering from rare diseases through better management and coordination efforts.
- With cancer set to become the leading cause of death in the EU by 2035²⁴, it is critical for the next Commission to ensure the correct and **complete implementation of all European Beating Cancer Plan initiatives**, as well as increase action on **cancer prevention and screening** by notably extending the Council recommendation on cancer screening²⁵ to additional types of cancer (e.g., lung cancer), building on further support to cancer research and innovation.



Measuring success

Sustainability and citizen well-being must be at the centre of how we measure prosperity in an economy of well-being²⁶. This should be built with a holistic, cross-sectoral approach which looks at quality of life, accessibility and quality of healthcare and social protection services, the level of environmental protection, and the stability of the labour market.

The change in economic systems' that will allow us to achieve better health and well-being outcomes and creating the conditions for people to lead healthy lives must be driven and sustained by the consideration of these aspects, which should be the basis for new tools to measure prosperity, in line with the recommendations of the OECD²⁷. The implementation of these elements should be monitored and would inform policies towards the achievement of an economy of well-being.

Recommendation

- **Achieve political commitment by EU institutions and Member States to swiftly adopt and use well-being indicators.** The Commission should issue a **Communication addressing the Economy of Wellbeing in which a strategy is set out for developing and adopting well-being indicators and metrics**²⁸. The EU and its Member States should also draft a Charter of Health and Well-being²⁹, a multi-stakeholder commitment towards agreeing on jointly defined goals and building collaborative bridges (including collaboration with civil society).
- **Implement indicators and metrics horizontally in EU policymaking** to measure the effectiveness of policy in relation to citizen well-being to help build an economy of well-being.
 - Ensure regular evaluation of policies building on a data-driven approach and systematic monitoring, integrating disaggregated indicators of population well-being into routine data collection. Increased statistical capacities should support this through a reorganisation of national agencies for statistics, Eurostat, and the European System of Accounts for the collection of data.
 - Reform the European macro-economic policy framework through reforms to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the EU and European Semester process to incorporate well-being indicators in national budget assessments, including national Health and Environmental Ministers in the process.



Building sustainable & resilient systems

With an apparent permacrisis ongoing³⁰, the resilience of our systems is threatened more than ever by long-term and systemic challenges. Our healthcare systems and societies are underprepared to face climate change, antimicrobial resistance, and future pandemics.

Adequate regulatory frameworks, mechanisms, procedures, and methodologies that can sustain a long-term systemic approach that enables fit for future, sustainable, and resilient systems must be put in place before it is too late.



Recommendation

- **Harness metadata** to gain a **comprehensive understanding** of current and foreseen societal megatrends (e.g., urbanisation, ageing population), threats and interlinks (e.g., cascade effects and interlinks of health, climate change and other health and well-being determinants) and guide the EU in building a **cross-sectoral long-term vision** to overcome our societies' vulnerabilities (e.g., ensuring affordability and availability in quantity and quality of essential resources and services through increased water and agricultural resilience, food and energy security, among others).
- **Structurally increase funding for healthcare** across the European Union to invest in healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare professionals, and improving access to essential medicines. Investment should also support **Europe becoming an innovative research and development hub** for breakthrough technologies that improve patient outcomes, notably in diseases with unmet needs (e.g., rare and ultrarare cancers) and ensures faster access to new medicines.
- Create a **dedicated fund for well-being and health in all policies** dedicated to support the health in all policies approach and to fund measures fostering and ensuring public health in other policy areas.
- **Broaden the concept of green public procurement** by incorporating well-being related criteria, streamline the concept across all sectors and introduce mandatory targets in most relevant sectors' legislation.

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