

# All Policies for a Healthy Europe

## Revisited Narrative 2024-2029

### Introduction

In the face of recent geopolitical challenges, such as the global pandemic, regional conflicts, or the rising climate change inquietude, there has been a noticeable shift in what EU citizens expect from their leaders. The Conference on the Future of Europe, first, and more recently the EU Elections brought up the need for a more practical and grounded approach to decision-making – to move away from solely politically-driven initiatives and focus on what brings tangible benefits to society and the economy. This vision is also in line with Article 3 of the Treaty of the European Union, emphasising the promotion of peace and the well-being of its citizens.

At the same time, in September 2024, the EU welcomed the long-awaited Report on the Future of Europe's Competitiveness, prepared by former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. The Report clearly states that challenges in key sectors of the Union's economy are hindering sustainable growth across the bloc. The objective here is clear: to decarbonize Europe's economy by driving more investment in crucial areas, particularly the digitalization of industries and the development of human capital. While the European Union generally benefits from strong health systems and robust welfare states, it has failed to fully leverage these strengths into globally competitive industries. This underscores the mission of All Policies for a Healthy Europe, which has always been to promote health and well-being across to drive suitable policy areas, ensuring that these strengths are maximised to drive sustainable growth and resilience of our systems. We advocate for a refreshed and more comprehensive narrative that extends beyond traditional economic, GDP-centred drivers like productivity growth and competitiveness. Our focus is on integrating a holistic approach to a 'just transition,' which emphasises high environmental and health standards to achieve sustainable well-being.

In supporting the renewed EU leadership, All Policies for a Healthy Europe will focus its work on key drivers of the quality of life of EU citizens, as well as the economy of the Union. In doing so, we want to have clear guidelines on both sides of the competitiveness coin: the EU's economy and the lives of its citizens. Although the Union's productivity and competitiveness are set to be driven by innovation, investments, skills, and sustainable growth, we cannot forget its people and their quality of life. Therefore, All Policies for a Healthy Europe will also focus on advocating for green technologies, resilient infrastructure, and sustainable management of resources, to make sure no one is left behind.

### Economic drivers

**Productivity growth:** Productivity growth refers to the increase in the efficiency of producing goods and services. As recognised by the Spanish EU Presidency Report "Resilient EU2030", health is a critical sector of investment for the European economy, one in which increased security of supply chains and emphasis on the reliability of resources will need to be prioritised if we are to ensure a safe and healthy future for our citizens. Ensuring reliable and sustainable production and supply chains is a must, given the experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and the current state of permacrisis the world is experiencing. Productivity growth relaxes the constraints of scarcity and creates new opportunities – for individuals, businesses, and the general community.

In this context, All Policies for a Healthy Europe will focus on key policy strategies such as:

- **Innovation & Digitalisation:** To be able to shape the future, we must harness new technological developments and emerging solutions, which can be seamlessly integrated into our production chains. However, fostering innovation involves not only putting forward new projects but also implementing existing products and services and ensuring citizens do not face barriers to accessing them. Particularly crucial for the improvement of EU citizen's overall health and well-being is the potential of AI technologies, .

which must be actively supported in both their adoption and development. The proposal of the newly re-elected Commission President of an Apply AI Strategy is thus welcomed, as it sets to provide the needed support for EU businesses to give concretisation to AI tools. The EU AI Research Council will give thrust to the bloc's research activities. However, there is no AI development without data access - which is why our coalition supports maximising the potential of the European Health Data Space, as well as the proposal for a Data Union Strategy to clarify data rules and harness their full potential.

- **Productivity Investments:** Europe should increase its attractiveness level for investments, and although Member States have an array of strategies already in place, more attention should be paid to combining them with the digital and green transitions. For this, we welcome the recognition of this crucial connection by Commission President Von der Leyen in the Strategy for European Life Sciences, which supports the twin transition and emerging technologies. Notably, our coalition is pleased to see the announcement of future initiatives around biotechnologies, such as the European Biotech Act, aimed at scaling this technology from the lab to the market. We need to ensure that the right enabling factors for this necessary transition are in place, providing infrastructure, laboratories, and real-world sandboxes to support the testing and trial processes of new technologies.
- **Education and Skills Development:** The health sector is among those with the highest increase in vacancy rates. Unfortunately, one of the root causes of this is the lack of relevant skills. To close this skills and labour gap, the EU must enhance the education system to equip the workforce with relevant skills and promote continuous learning, ensuring that technological development goes hand in hand with the capacity of people to harness its potential and make use of these new tools. As recognised by the [European Skills Agenda](#), it is paramount that when we train and educate the workforce of the future and equip them with the skills they will need in the future – with researchers and scientists being at the forefront of these efforts (Action 5 of the agenda). Research and innovation are the keys to unlocking our path to sustainable growth, as recognised by Action 6 of the European Skills Agenda, which sets clear deliverables for green and digital skills. Similarly, Action 7 sets the way to enhance entrepreneurial and transversal skills. One of the EU's success stories is the free movement of people within the Single Market – but full enjoyment of this right is still hindered by the possibility for millions of workers of seeing their qualifications recognised throughout the bloc. We see this as one of the main challenges faced by health workers. Therefore, we will strongly support initiatives such as the proposed Skills Portability Initiative and the European Degree.

**Competitiveness:** Competitiveness is the ability of an actor, i.e. the EU, member countries, their businesses, organisations, and individuals, to compete effectively in the global, European, national, and regional markets and ensure sustainable economic growth. A competitive economy holds many benefits: it attracts foreign investment, leading to job creation and economic diversification; ensures that consumers have access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices; promotes sustainable economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality. At the same time, given that Europe's economy is mainly composed of SMEs and micro enterprises, the Union's efforts to boost competitiveness must also consider the local dimension – as it is crucial to ensure a level playing field for both big and small players alike.

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- **Infrastructure Improvements:** In an increasingly unstable geopolitical world, Europe needs to step up its resources and capacity to protect critical infrastructure, especially in terms of its reliability on online systems. The work done in the past mandate, with the adoption of NIS2 CERD and the creation of the Cyber Shield, were necessary steps in the right direction. However, more needs to be done to ensure the proper security of our critical infrastructure. This is why we are pleased to see that the Commission President has pledged to propose a European Action Plan on the cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers within the first 100 days of the mandate. We also welcome the proposed launch of the European Civil Defence Mechanism and the European Climate Adaptation Plan mapping the risks and preparedness needs for infrastructure, energy, water, food, and land.

- **Sustainable Economic Growth:** It is crucial to balance economic development with environmental and social policies. Concrete actions are necessary to ensure that the green transition does not leave anyone behind, creating new opportunities without worsening conditions for any group of people. Environment sustainability policies must align with regulatory requirements and be fit for purpose to ensure the continuous availability and safe access to medical products for patients and users. Thus, All Policies for a Healthy Europe welcomes the proposal for a new Action Plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights – especially its focus on promoting digital skills and mental health. At the same time, the overarching goal of achieving the Green Deal targets without sacrificing competitiveness and economic strength is driving new efforts. This must be balanced with ensuring that environmental sustainability policies align with regulatory requirements and are fit for purpose, always supporting the availability and safe access to medical products for patients and users.

### Quality of life drivers

**Climate change adaptation and mitigation:** Adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change is essential to safeguarding our communities and economies. It is crucial for protecting ecosystems, human and planetary health, as well as economic stability. It also ensures the long-term availability of natural resources, which is essential for health and economic activities, and supports a sustainable economy, fostering intergenerational equity and stability. For this, we fully endorse plans to enshrine the EU's 90% GHG emission cut for 2040 in the EU Climate Law as a prerequisite to protect the health and well-being of future generations.

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- **Green Technologies:** Investing in renewable energy sources, advancing green technology, and prioritising funding for the development, production, and widespread adoption of clean technologies is crucial for ensuring Europe's competitive sustainability. Therefore, we support the creation of Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships to help secure the supply of clean energy and clean tech from across the world.
- **Sustainable management of resources:** With climate change being one of the greatest risks to our security, we need better management of resources – especially those safeguarding Europe's water security. For that, we support the development of a new European Water Resilience Strategy, aimed at taking a circular economy approach, i.e. ensuring sources are properly managed, scarcity is addressed, pollution is prevented at the source, and that the competitive innovative edge of our water industry keeps improving.
- **Policy implementation:** We need to ensure the implementation of environmental policies for climate adaptation and risk mitigation, as well as water and air quality protection, to comply with the goals of the European Green Deal and implement the existing legal framework for 2030. The climate crisis is accelerating and an equally urgent need to decarbonise and industrialise our economy simultaneously exists. We must focus on implementing the existing legal framework for 2030 while ensuring coherence with sectorial legislation. Further harmonization, coherence with sectorial legislation, and a level playing field are also needed to help businesses adapt, ensure a seamless implementation of new policies for all stakeholders, as well as support compliance.
- **Reduction Carbon Footprint:** Focus on implementing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is crucial – that's why we strongly welcome the proposal from the Commission President to introduce a new Clean Industrial Deal within the first 100 days. To give concretisation to the Green Deal objectives, Europe needs to invest in new, innovative production processes and sustainable resources and raw materials. Fair and transparent partnerships with industry and stakeholders will be beneficial to ensure evidence and technology-based rules.
- **Supporting companies:** Let's create the right conditions for companies to reach common sustainability goals. We believe that the proposed Decarbonisation Accelerator Act is a step in the right direction: the EU cannot achieve its sustainable goals without its economic players driving this effort.

**Resilient systems:** High environmental and health standards play a crucial role in the well-being of European residents and in strengthening our systems' resilience against shocks and crises. Resilience is a multifaceted concept that includes sufficient resources, prevention plans, cooperation mechanisms, and contingency measures. For systems to be truly resilient, they must be prepared not only for potential crises but also for managing their consequences. Europe has valuable lessons to draw from recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Moving forward, our preparedness relies on fostering solidarity among Member States and prioritizing prevention.

In this context, All Policies for a Healthy Europe will focus on policy strategies such as:

- **Healthy lifestyles:** A healthy lifestyle plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of chronic diseases and enhancing physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Achieving this requires cross-sectoral collaboration across various levels of society, ensuring that citizens have access to the resources and environments needed to support healthy living. Key components include fostering healthy environments, improving indoor and outdoor air quality, reducing water pollution, ensuring sufficient green spaces in cities, and providing spaces for movement and exercise. It is essential to view physical activity and exercise as long-term investments in the future well-being of individuals and society, rather than as costs. While healthy lifestyles depend greatly on personal choices, we must ensure access to healthy options for all Europeans. Prevention, awareness-raising, and making healthy options accessible to all Europeans are fundamental.
- **Preventive physical and mental health:** Health systems should prioritise preventive care, shifting from a reactive and curative approach to a proactive one emphasising long-term societal and economic benefits. Preventive health is not merely a cost but an investment that enhances overall health and well-being, leading to healthier populations that foster greater social cohesion and economic prosperity across various sectors. We encourage the Commission to complete the European Health Union with a focus on supporting preventive health systems, diversification of supply chains, access to treatment, and strategic inventories. Additionally, we welcome the emphasis on preventive health in von der Leyen's guidelines.
- **Equitable access to (digital) healthcare:** Equitable access to health products and services, including through digital solutions, should be prioritised to make systems truly resilient. Providing citizens with various ways to access healthcare services, digitally and in person, will enable them to choose the services that align best with both their healthcare and practical needs. As a result, access to healthcare digitally, including across borders, will ultimately enhance the well-being of those struggling with access to physical care (e.g. mobility issues or rural/remote areas) and strengthen the resilience of systems, leaving no one behind.
- **Information & literacy:** Misinformation has an immense impact on health and equity – as the lack of accurate and reliable health information can result in poor health outcomes. We must start by recognising verified information as a key determinant of health and invest more in health literacy programs, ensure access to verified and data-backed health information, correctly implement rules on content verification and content take down, in cases that contradict well-established scientific findings, particularly when that content poses a risk to the wellbeing of those most vulnerable to health misinformation.
- **Health inclusivity:** Despite covering most of the health workforce (76%), women's role in the sector has been missing from the major concerns of the EU. At the same time, lack of focus on women's health creates disparities in treatment and access to proper care. To ensure that healthcare is an inclusive realm where everyone can have access to proper care, the EU should consider developing a gender-oriented stream of initiatives within the European Health Union.
- **Healthy environment:** We shall ensure access to a healthy environment and green spaces in urban and regional planning – because Europe must start treating climate change as the health threat that it is. Recognition of the health risks associated with a changing and increasingly unstable climate is a must to ensure that proper tools are developed to prevent, and only at a later stage deal with, health risks connected to air, water and soil pollution. Air quality, proper water and waste management, and fertile and healthy soil are all prerequisites of healthy conditions for humans. That is why our coalition stands ready to support the proper implementation of the Green Deal commitments.

- **Resilience of water services:** Equitable access to safe, reliable water, and sanitation services is not only a human right but also a prerequisite for public health and well-being, as well as the functioning of Europe's industry. However, nowadays the resilience of these services is threatened by both increasing competition for scarce water resources and increased dependency on imports from unfriendly third countries, done to tackle the growing pollution of drinking water resources and wastewater. *Guaranteeing access to water resources and protecting them from pollution through control-at-source measures will ensure that water suppliers can reliably accompany Europe's green transition.*
- **Innovation Ecosystems:** The EU needs to focus on encouraging more public-private collaborations, as well as on supporting start-ups and entrepreneurship to drive innovation and market dynamism. A way to do so is through cutting red tape and providing viable solutions for smaller players to tackle administrative costs. *All Policies for Healthy Europe stands for the optimal use of resources from our industry players: a simple and streamlined approach to administrative compliance would improve the overall efficiency and capacities of smaller players.*
- **Competition:** Fostering a fair and competitive business environment drives efficiency – hence *bolstering the Single Market is essential for enhancing the EU's long-term competitiveness and economic resilience.* On the one hand, a model as such offers European businesses a chance to scale up on an equal footing, fostering regional synergies and encouraging European value chains. On the other, however, a strong Single Market empowers the EU to set global quality standards in areas such as environmental protection, human rights, and fair competition.
- **Trade:** Open trade policies are the backbone of expanding markets and ensuring access to resources, while strong trade relationships are critical to fostering growth and resilience. Reliable supply chains are fundamental to resilient health systems, encompassing complex, global networks that involve multiple components sourced and produced across various sites and countries. *The European system cannot and should not function in a vacuum, but rather be interdependent on the relationships it builds, both within its borders and through strategic international partnerships.* On the one hand, a way to foster transnational investments is to properly make use of available tools such as structural funds and complete the development of the Single Market to remove obstacles to cross-border trade. On the latter, recently adopted instruments such as the Critical Raw Material Act, the Net Zero Industry Act, and the Chips Act, need to be at the core of Europe's action to secure resources, foster alignment with other like-minded partners, and set common standards. *Europe's success relies on its capacity to work together as one, as well as complement other external actors.*

By raising the quality of policy strategies across sectors, we are convinced we can ultimately improve the welfare of society and the economy. For this, we partner with EU decision-makers to instill the health for all policies rationale into more sectors of the economy.

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