



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages





| EU internal action

Overview and challenges

Helping to ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages is a major priority for the EU. SDG targets related to this goal include the following:

- ▶ reducing the global maternal mortality ratio; ending preventable deaths of new-borns and children;
- ▶ ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other communicable diseases;
- ▶ achieving universal health coverage and access to safe, effective and affordable medicines and vaccines for all;
- ▶ strengthening country capacities for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks;
- ▶ reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases; and
- ▶ halving the health impact of air pollution and the number of road deaths.

While progress had been made in many of these areas in recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic severely undermined some of these efforts by overwhelming healthcare systems in the EU and causing disruptions and delays in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases other than COVID-19. Life expectancy, which had been on the rise, decreased across the board, and we expect to see rising incidences of cancer, HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis (B and C), which can only be controlled effectively through timely prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

There is also a dramatic rise in mental health problems, resulting from isolation, anxiety and fear during the pandemic, further exacerbated by continuing global crises.

Lifestyle-related risk factors such as poor diet and physical inactivity are fuelling the rising burden of obesity, including childhood obesity, and non-communicable diseases. This too was an impact of the pandemic, when many people were more inactive and resorted to unhealthy habits as coping mechanisms. Poor lifestyle choices directly affect the quality of life and life expectancy and they have a negative impact on national health and social systems. SDG 3 targets will only be met through sustained, concentrated efforts focused on relevant policy areas.

Key initiatives

The EU has a wide range of policies in place that contribute to meeting SDG 3. Some of the most recent and relevant initiatives are set out below.

The [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#), launched in 2021, sets out a new EU approach to cancer prevention (including by vaccination), treatment and care through an integrated, health-in-all-policies and multi-stakeholder approach. It will work in tandem with the Horizon Europe Mission on Cancer, ensuring coherence between ambitious research goals and realistic policy aims. The EU4Health programme and other funding programmes have earmarked a total of EUR 4 billion for actions addressing cancer.



2030 targets and trends at EU level

Target and policy reference

By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being.

SDG target 3.4 has been addressed at EU level in the **Healthier Together – EU non-communicable diseases initiative** dealing with key disease areas including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, mental health and neurological disorders, chronic respiratory diseases, and health determinants.

By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases

SDG target 3.3. has been addressed at EU level in the following:

- **EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025** and the **EU Action Plan on Drugs** setting the reduction of the prevalence and incidence of drug-related infectious diseases as a priority area for the EU
- **Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health** which sets out common rules for epidemiological surveillance and includes HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and tuberculosis in the list of notifiable diseases subject to epidemiological surveillance.
- In its prevention pillar, **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** specifically addresses hepatitis B and the hepatitis C virus aiming to prevent cancers caused by infectious diseases, such as liver cancer.

Less than 5 % of the population uses tobacco by 2040, compared with around 25 % today

Major tools to implement SDG target 3.a at EU level include a **revision of the Tobacco Products Directive**, the **Tobacco Advertising Directive** and the **Tobacco Taxation Directive** as well as of the **Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments**. These are further supported by the strengthened implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.

Trends

Trends in this area have been negative in the short term, with preventable mortality rising by 8.2 %, from 166.3 per 100 000 population in 2015 to 180 per 100 000 in 2020. On the other hand, treatable mortality has fallen by 4.3 %, from 95.9 per 100 000 population to 91.7 per 100 000 over the same period.

In addition to these numbers, mental health also plays a significant role. In the EU in 2017, there were, on average, almost 10.5 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants resulting from suicide. The latest figures show that 84 million Europeans are affected by mental health issues (1 in every 6 citizens) and depression among young people has more than doubled in 2022. Disruptions in, and growing demand for, mental health support have challenged already-stretched mental healthcare services, resulting in nearly half of all young Europeans reporting unmet needs for mental healthcare in the spring of 2022.

Data across EU/EEA countries up to 2015 indicated increasing trends in rates of mortality from liver cancer (deaths attributed to hepatitis B and hepatitis C are estimated to account for around 55 % of liver cancer deaths). Modelling has suggested that mortality due to viral hepatitis could increase if responses are not scaled up.

Deaths due to HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis have been falling steadily in the EU between 2005 and 2020: deaths per 100 000 people fell from 1.8 to 0.6 for tuberculosis, from 1.3 to 0.4 for HIV/AIDS and from 1.7 to 0.8 for hepatitis.

However, substantial inequities within and across the EU exist around the prevention and care of HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis B and C. Resources have been diverted from SDG areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic and countries are still struggling to regain pre-pandemic momentum. Addressing barriers faced by key affected populations is essential for reaching the SDGs. Concerted efforts (service integration, cross-sectoral collaboration, sufficient financing, political commitment) are needed to ensure progress towards the SDG 3 targets.

Smoking prevalence among the population aged 15 or over fell between 2006 and 2020, from 31 % to 25 %. Nevertheless, this still means a quarter of adults in the EU smoke. In 2020, more men (28 %) than women (22 %) reported that they smoke. However, the decline in smoking prevalence is less evident for women than for men, which can partially explain the narrowing gender gap in life expectancy.

Target and policy reference

Reduce the health impacts of air pollution by more than 55 % (premature deaths) by 2030

SDG target 3.9 has been addressed at EU level in the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#).

Halve the overall number of road deaths in the EU by 2020 compared with 2010, with a further 50 % reduction target for deaths and injuries between 2021 and 2030.

The target is set in the [strategic action plan on road safety](#) and the [EU road safety policy framework 2021-2030](#).

Trends

Air pollution is the number one environmental cause of death in Europe. The number of life years lost due to exposure to air pollution by fine particulate matter has decreased over the years. The [Third Clean Air Outlook](#) of December 2022 shows that the 2030 target of the Zero Pollution Action Plan on health impacts from air pollution can be achieved. As the impacts of air pollution would still remain high, the Commission has proposed to [revise the Ambient Air Quality Directives](#), including a closer alignment of EU air quality standards with WHO guidelines by 2030, and a 2050 zero pollution objective.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of deaths on EU roads fell by 36 %, helped by a sharp decrease in 2020 due to lower traffic levels related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was short of the target of 50 % fewer deaths over the decade.

Early indications for the new decade (baseline year 2019, as agreed with Member States) are that the number of fatalities continues to fall but not at the pace needed to meet the 2030 target of 50 % fewer deaths.

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 3 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat's monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan has also put forward actions to help create a **tobacco-free generation** where less than 5 % of the population uses tobacco by 2040, compared with around 25 % today. The Commission will continue to prioritise protecting young people from the harmful effects of tobacco and related products, especially given the growing popularity of emerging tobacco and nicotine products.

The **Healthier Together – EU non-communicable diseases initiative**, with a budget of EUR 353 million, was launched in 2022 to support EU countries in identifying and implementing effective policies and actions to reduce the burden of major non-communicable diseases and to improve citizens' health and well-being. Actions on the five strands are being taken forward under the EU4Health programme's annual work programmes for 2022 and 2023.

The **Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases**, adopted in 2018, calls for a multitude of actions with a common goal of increasing the uptake of vaccination across the EU in a life-course perspective.

Access to healthcare is one of the 20 principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and its **Action Plan**. **Directive 2011/24/EU on patient rights in cross-border healthcare** gives EU citizens the right to access healthcare in the EU and to be reimbursed. The **Strategy for the rights of persons**

with disabilities 2021–2030 aims to ensure that all people with disabilities can fully participate in society and the economy. Fostering the development of digital health services, the **European Health Data Space** promotes access to health data to improve healthcare, research and policymaking. The **European Care Strategy** promotes quality, affordable and accessible care services across the EU and supports the improvement of the situation both for care receivers and for the people caring for them, professionally or informally.

The **Zero Pollution Action Plan**, adopted in 2021, includes targets to reduce the health and environmental impacts of pollution by 2030. It also envisaged legislative proposals, including to implement stricter standards for industrial emissions and air pollution. Several of these **proposals** have been adopted in the meantime.

The **EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030** establishes and underpins the EU's goal of halving the number of fatalities and serious injuries on European roads by 2030 as a milestone on the way to 'Vision Zero' – zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. The Commission has also proposed to revise the existing **Directive on Intelligent Transport Systems**. This will, inter alia, ensure that essential safety-related services are made available to drivers along the TEN-T road network.



The Commission has also pioneered a major safety [eCall](#) initiative. This aims to save lives by speeding up the emergency response times in the event of a road crash anywhere in Europe. This initiative requires all new cars sold in the EU to be fitted with eCall devices that use space data from Galileo and EGNOS, the EU Space Programme flagships for satellite navigation. The device will automatically dial the European emergency number 112 to alert rescue services in the event of an accident and provide the vehicle's exact location.

Selected enablers

The Commission has coordinated and continues to implement a common European response to the coronavirus outbreak. The key part of this response is reflected in the legislative package forming part of the [European Health Union](#). The package aims to expand EU capacity for prevention, preparedness, surveillance, risk assessment, early warning and response, to address cross-border health threats and better protect EU citizens. It strengthens the EU health security framework ([Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health](#)), bolsters mandates of the key agencies, namely the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the [European Medicines Agency](#) (EMA), and provides for the functioning of the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority ([HERA](#)) in times of crisis.

In the same vein, EU preparedness by implementing existing medical capacities under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) will be boosted through the rescEU reserve. To date, eleven medical stockpiles exist and comprise of countermeasures, equipment and relevant items to fight cross-border threats to health. This comes on top of the already existing assets in the field of medical evacuation and will soon be further complemented by four CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) stockpiling reserves and Emergency Medical Teams complemented by specialised care teams being set up under rescEU, and of the existing fully operational and deployable medical capacities included in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP).

Moreover, resolute action has been taken to reinforce EU public health sectors and mitigate the socio-economic impact in the EU. Support to Member States was quickly mobilised to help them coordinate their national responses and contain the virus. In 2020, the Commission joined the [COVID-19 vaccine global access facility](#) to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines for everyone who needs them, and contributed EUR 400 million for vaccine purchasing.

In November 2022, [the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority \(HERA\)](#) published its first [work plan](#) for preparedness and response to health

emergencies in terms of improving access to medical countermeasures. With a budget of EUR 1.3 billion, HERA can now start implementing actions, in collaboration with other services, to strengthen preparedness and response capabilities within the EU for medical countermeasures, address vulnerabilities and strategic dependencies, and contribute to reinforcing the global health emergency architecture in this field.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) was also set up as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic; it has a budget of EUR 723.8 billion in loans and grants. These are not exclusively reserved for health, but health is one of six areas that the RRF will fund. According to the most recent figures, some EUR 43 billion will go towards health (8.6% of all funding planned under the RRF).

NextGenerationEU is a temporary recovery instrument with a budget of more than EUR 800 billion to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Part of the budget is reserved for building a safer and healthier EU. All EU countries will be supported: to protect themselves against health threats; to invest more in research and innovation to develop vaccines and treatments; to modernise their health systems so that hospitals in every EU country have better access to new technology and to medical supplies; and to fund training for Europe's medical and healthcare professionals.

Cohesion policy funds proved to be the first port of call in helping Member States shouldering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. EU Member States made use of the extra flexibility provided through the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) to prioritise measures to increase spending on healthcare. Under the NextGenerationEU, a specific EUR 50.6 billion under the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) supported crisis repair measures through the 2014-2020 Cohesion policy funds. REACT-EU was the very first instrument to be used under NextGenerationEU, with the first payment made on 28 June 2021 to fund medical institutions, researchers, and vulnerable people.

The **EU4Health programme**, with a total budget provision of EUR 5.3 billion is the main financial instrument for funding the EU's health initiatives. The programme provided the necessary support in an emergency to address the pandemic, but it also aims to improve the general health of people living in the EU, reduce health inequalities, and strengthen health systems in general. It provides co-funding in the fields of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis B and C.

The **Horizon Europe Cancer Mission** call has a budget of EUR 60 million to design and conduct randomised investigator-initiated pragmatic clinical trials. The aim is to deliver effective and evidence-based treatment interventions for implementation by healthcare systems at the level of local

communities, EU regions, Member States and associated countries, taking into account socio-economic and biological stratification, such as the biology of the disease, gender, cancer stage, and age. Investments are also planned to establish, scale up or improve primary cancer prevention programmes and to address underlying barriers that prevent their uptake and effective implementation.

The European Commission has also shortlisted 11 new projects worth EUR 120 million from **Horizon Europe** for supporting and enabling urgent research into the coronavirus and its variants. It will contribute to the Commission's overall action to prevent, mitigate and respond to the impact of the virus and its variants. The 11 shortlisted projects include 312 research teams from 40 countries, with 38 participants are from 23 countries outside of the EU. Among the projects are 'Cohorts united against COVID-19 variants of concern' and 'Clinical trials for therapeutics and vaccines'.

Under the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the 'Multi-country viral hepatitis community screening, vaccination, and care' project was launched in November 2022. The objective of this proposal is to scale up and adapt community-based viral hepatitis testing and hepatitis B vaccination models of care. It will put a particular focus on marginalised populations with a documented high incidence and prevalence, and will use diagnostic tools and patient-centred referral processes to reduce mortality associated with liver cancer.

Another example is the project 'Health impacts of air pollution' in **Slovakia**, supported by the EU **Structural Reform Support Programme** under the 2019 call. Slovakia is one of the Member States with insufficient air quality and has one of the highest concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5). Despite some improvements achieved before the project, the situation remained unsatisfactory and Slovakia lacked a deeper air quality analysis with estimates of health impacts at the micro level. The primary goal of the project was therefore to build a toolbox for cost-effective policies in order to improve air quality and thus reduce human health impact.

Stakeholder engagement

The Commission uses a range of different tools to engage with stakeholders over the lifecycle of public health policies. These include the following.

- ▶ The **EU Health Policy Platform** is an interactive tool to promote discussions about public health concerns, and share knowledge and best practices. The platform hosts thematic networks led by stakeholders, such as a network on HIV, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections, and mental health.
- ▶ **EU Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) One Health Network** includes government experts from the human health, animal health and environmental sector,

EU scientific agencies (ECDC, EMA, and the European Food Safety Authority) and Commission experts. The network aims to present national action plans and strategies, to share best practices, and to discuss policy options.

- ▶ The new **Commission expert group on public health** will advise the Commission on policy development and transfer of best practices related to major public health challenges. These challenges include non-communicable diseases and communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis, vaccination, and antimicrobial resistance. The aim is to promote coordination between Member States.
- ▶ In 2015, the Commission launched the **EU Health Award** to recognise the work of NGOs in stopping Ebola. Since then, the awards have expanded to NGOs and educational institutions seeking to promote communication and health literacy on cancer prevention among children and young people, to those seeking to prevent and reduce obesity, and to community-based initiatives alleviating the mental health impacts of COVID-19.
- ▶ The **annual EU Road Safety Results Conference** brings together Member State authorities, senior EU policymakers and the wider European road safety community to discuss progress made towards implementing Vision Zero (zero road deaths by 2050).
- ▶ The **EU Excellence in Road Safety Awards** celebrate the achievements of specific and measurable actions

by organisations aimed at improving road safety across Europe.

Multilevel approach

SDG delivery implies ambitious action at all levels. Good practices in implementing SDG 3 include the following.

At national level, **Slovenia** is implementing an e-care project to improve the quality of life, autonomy and safety of older people in their home environment. The E-Home Care project is co-financed by the EU under the European Social Fund and runs until September 2023, with funding available for up to 5 000 EU beneficiaries. Thanks to technological solutions, individuals can rely upon free telehealth and telecare services and receive faster intervention in the case of accidents and other events.

At local level, an action by the city of **Thessaloniki in Greece** to implement SDG 3 is an EU-funded project dealing with the urban heat island effect and its impacts on human health, primarily human mortality. The project is developing a set of modelling systems for short-term prediction and for future projection, to define high-quality health warning systems related to heat. An online forecasting system and a mobile app are available for free to citizens and visitors. The network of dissemination includes the public health system, emergency services, civil protection, social services and GPs.

EU external action

Global trends

The improvement in coverage and quality of health systems and services in the period 2010-2022 has resulted in a slow but steady improvement of most health indicators, with sub-Saharan Africa systematically performing less well than the average. However, much of this progress has been halted or reversed since the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the EU and its Member States showed commitment to strive for equal access to vaccines and health technologies for partner countries, including improving manufacturing capacity and support to research. The latest **2022 UN report on SDGs** underlined the pandemic's devastating impact, with deaths directly attributed to COVID-19 of totalling 5.4 million people globally. But with nearly 15 million excess deaths during this period, the figure might actually be three times higher.



Internal/external coherence including policy coherence for development

The **new EU Global Health Strategy** launched in November 2022 guides global, regional and bilateral actions of the EU, its institutions and its Member States in supporting partner countries in a coordinated way. Using a Team Europe approach wherever feasible, it aims to design appropriate measures to regain lost ground and make substantial progress towards their respective national SDG targets on health.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) together with Member State national regulatory agencies and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and its Member State counterparts play a significant role in building capacity in partner countries. In this context, the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) focuses on neglected diseases affecting people living in partner countries and promotes scientific cooperation between European researchers and counterparts in developing countries with a strong focus on Africa.



The EU responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the establishment of ACT-A (Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator with COVAX as the vaccine-sharing structure) as a mechanism to promote global solidarity and justice. Throughout the pandemic, the EU was the world's first exporter of COVID-19 vaccines, having delivered more than 2.6 billion doses of finished vaccines to 168 countries outside the EU. The EU also supports national COVID-19 vaccination strategies in partner countries as well as the development of local pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity.

Additionally, global health funds and structures were directly supported at a large scale to support national efforts in partner countries around the world to strengthen their health systems to deliver needed services to safeguard people's lives. Among the funds and structures were the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Translating the emergency measure ACT-A into a permanent solution to address Pandemic Preparedness and Response at a global level, the World Bank and the EU have together initiated the Pandemic Fund, which launched its first call for proposal to support countries in their national efforts to be better prepared for next global health threat. This will be complemented by a global platform to provide for Medical Counter Measures in times of future global health emergencies building on the experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the EU has been at the forefront of the work of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a proposal by a group of WTO members to waive parts of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) in response to the pandemic, the EU has actively engaged in formal and informal discussions to work on a compromise outcome to be agreed by consensus at the WTO. The EU has also advocated for a comprehensive approach in relation to trade and health, which included elements such as trade facilitating measures, improved transparency, restraint from export restrictions, and expanding production capacity. This resulted in a WTO joint response to the pandemic and preparedness for future pandemics. It included a decision that waives certain obligations of eligible WTO members in respect of the TRIPS Agreement, and which allows developing countries to authorise a company to manufacture and export COVID-19 vaccines in a fast and simplified manner without the consent of the patent owner. The objective is to enable partner countries to scale up their production capacity and supply vaccines to other countries in the region. It should also support the establishment of manufacturing hubs that rely on supply chains in multiple countries.



At regional level, support to SDG3 predominantly focuses on projects in Africa (33%), Asia (21%) and America (9%).



EU and Member States external financial support for SDG implementation and results

On the EU's longer-term support, EU institutions reported to OECD commitments of EUR 4 billion in projects contributing to SDG 3 in 2021. The largest share of the EU contribution to SDG 3 is accounted for projects that target SDG 3 as the main SDG. These projects also contribute to other interlinked SDGs such as SDG 5, SDG 17, SDG 10 and SDG 9. Other SDGs also contribute to SDG 3 as a significant objective. The main contributors are SDG 1, SDG 6 and SDG 8. When taking into account also other official flows, private funds mobilized through public intervention and support to international public goods, the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD) of the EU to SDG 3 amounted to EUR 5.2 billion in 2021. In terms of **selected results of assistance** ⁽⁷⁾, from 2018 to 2021, 30 674 000 women of reproductive age were using modern contraception methods with EU support.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021 contributed EUR 11.3 billion to SDG 3. At regional level, support to SDG 3 predominantly focuses on projects in Africa (33%), Asia (21%) and America (9%). EU and Member State financial support for SDG 3 also has a strong global component (30%). This global component is partly explained by EU and Member State contributions to global funds in the health sector.

The EU and Member States have contributed a total of EUR 22 billion to the five main global health funds. The largest of these funds is the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) with a total EU contribution of over USD 17 billion. The GFATM does not only focus on the three illnesses, but it also includes components focused more broadly on strengthening health systems.

Moreover, the EU's Member States are among the most important and reliable funders of the WHO. They have pushed for a more reliable funding of the WHO's budget to make the WHO less dependent on short-term project funding or earmarked voluntary contributions. The EU has

⁽⁷⁾ For the methodology on results, see the same section under SDG 2.

pursued for several years a project funded by multiple donors aimed at supporting the WHO's crucial role at country level on strengthening health systems for universal health coverage, which is at the centre of SDG 3. Additionally, there are numerous EU projects responding to the local requirements of WHO country offices to address specific needs for a specific disease or systemic health challenge.

The EU and several Member States are also among the main contributors to the UN Road Safety Fund, which carries out strategic projects to increase road safety to lower death rates arising from road-related accidents.

Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

EU external policies in the field of health are guided by the World Health Organization's concept of 'health systems strengthening'. This fosters national ownership of health strategies by aiming to sustainably improve the quality, coverage and affordability of healthcare and to enhance health systems. The end goal is to provide **equitable access to quality health services** and products, thereby achieving **universal health coverage**. This is to be enabled by sufficient health financing policies and the development of comprehensive health strategies in partner countries, with a focus on:

- ▶ investments in both infrastructure and the health workforce;
- ▶ the establishment of reliable health information systems;
- ▶ access to essential medicines at an affordable price; and
- ▶ encouragement of government leadership and ownership of health sector policies that serve the needs of the people and lead the way to the various SDG 3 targets.

The EU aims to promote and support a comprehensive and inter-sectoral approach to health, ranging from research and development of new health technologies, and taking action against global health related threats such as air pollution, antimicrobial resistance and climate change, to the continued fight against the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS at country level, or enhancing road safety efforts. Given the inter-linkages that these varying forms of support imply, the EU and Member States support partner countries in pursuing a 'health in all policies' approach.

Health is also a priority focus of the EU's humanitarian assistance, to limit preventable excess mortality, permanent disability and diseases associated with natural or man-made humanitarian crises. In fragile and heavily disrupted systems, humanitarian health funding contributes to the provision of primary healthcare, vaccinations, access to medicines and medical devices. An emergency health response to outbreaks and building national capacities for preparedness are important to cope with increased recurrence of epidemics. During

the COVID-19 pandemic, a key humanitarian contribution was providing vaccines in the 'last mile', an initiative led by Germany and the G7. Mental health and psychosocial support are an integral part of humanitarian health assistance in cases of sexual violence, mental disorders, trauma and high distress.

Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In Africa, the EU and Member States have launched **three regional Team Europe Initiatives on health as part of the Africa-Europe Investment Package supporting the roll-out of the Global Gateway strategy**, with a combined commitment of EUR 400 million over 2021-2027. Firstly, the Team Europe Initiative on **Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies (MAV+) in Africa**, launched at the EU-AU Summit in February 2022, focuses on promoting the development of an African pharmaceutical industry and its integration into the global pharmaceutical supply chain. This will lead to enhanced future pandemic preparedness and the continent's increased self-sufficiency with regard to medicinal products.

Secondly, a regional programme on **Health System Strengthening** combines three different Team Europe Initiatives: (i) on sustainable health security using a One Health approach; (ii) on digital health for health systems strengthening and universal health coverage; and (iii) on African-based public health capacity through support to public health institutions. The third regional Team Europe Initiative relates to **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**, which are being taken further within the framework laid down in the 2017 European Consensus on Development⁽⁸⁾. The combined allocated budget for these three regional programmes during the budget cycle 2021-2027 is EUR 400 million.

EU bilateral support related to SDG 3 focuses on achieving **universal health coverage** through measures to strengthen health systems with a particular emphasis on primary healthcare services currently reaching the poor and vulnerable in the 28 partner countries. To this end, the EU's multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027 commits EUR 1 billion for actions in partner countries. This is complemented by commitments for global actions over the same time period of EUR 1.2 billion with contributions to GFATM, GAVI, WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Another example of EU support is the EU financial contribution to the WHO initiative, **Health Security in Türkiye**, which aims at strengthening health security through integrated preparedness and response to epidemic threats of all origins in line with the International Health Regulations core capacities. The EU is also providing direct support to improve road safety in Africa at various levels,

⁽⁸⁾ See paragraph 34, 2017 European Consensus on Development.

from local to continental, with actions such as data collection and management, traffic police training and post-crash care.

To help partner countries address urgent and longer-term needs linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, support to health increased substantially in 2020. The EU, Member States and European financing institutions, in a Team Europe approach, swiftly responded to the pandemic and committed EUR 46 billion, of which over EUR 5 billion was provided to the **COVAX Facility** to ensure fair and equitable access to safe COVID-19 vaccines for all, and over EUR 7 billion to the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator. The EU's support to the **COVAX Facility** ensured access to COVID-19 vaccines for low- and middle-income countries (250 million vaccine doses by the end of 2021, making the EU and Member States the largest donor in this regard by 2021) and contributed to achieving global vaccine equity by securing vaccines for the 92 poorest countries.

As part of a common European response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in **Eastern Partnership** countries, the **European Union Solidarity for Health Initiative** aims to address short-term emergency needs, and the longer-term structural impacts; it has a special focus on the most vulnerable countries that have weak health systems. The initiative supports **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine** and helps them to address better the needs of the most vulnerable people. Furthermore, the EU signed a state- and resilience-building contract with the government of **Kosovo**⁽⁹⁾. This focuses on the implementation of the fiscal measures set out in the government's economic emergency package to increase resilience and mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in society.

Furthermore, also in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, several **EU humanitarian air bridge operations** took place in 2020. For instance, a total of 82.5 tonnes of life-saving material (personal protection gear, medicines, water purification equipment and family hygiene kits) was delivered to **Venezuela** to supply humanitarian partners in the field. More than 500 000 Venezuelans benefited from this aid, including children, women, and health professionals. In **Ethiopia**, the EU, with WHO and various emergency health agencies, has supported the response to COVID-19 and other outbreaks in conflict settings by ensuring access for operational agencies to vaccine pipelines, access for displaced and conflict-affected communities to public health campaigns, and the coordination of a common quality and timely response among emergency health actors.

In 2022, with its **humanitarian aid**, the EU supported **Afghanistan's health and nutrition sector** to provide primary and secondary health. Since September 2021, the EU has delivered 840 tonnes of life-saving medical equipment through

a dedicated **humanitarian air bridge** to Afghanistan, supporting the humanitarian operations of more than 15 partners (NGOs, UN agencies and international organisations) and reaching approximately 16.3 million beneficiaries in the country. In **Chile**, the EU has been providing emergency health services to refugees from Venezuela and other countries, providing life-saving/basic medical treatment and information on possibilities for further treatment and follow-up on more complicated medical issues at destination.

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually supportive and are coordinated to ensure complementarity and a positive impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives, Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda including SDG 3, such as the following illustrative initiatives.

Malta has contributed to the efforts to curb the COVID-19 pandemic by sharing more than 700 000 vaccines with countries in need, including Libya, Egypt, Rwanda, Ghana, Iran, Antigua and Ivory Coast. In addition, Malta supported Ghana, doctors were trained and the capacity of the local hospital in Kumasi was increased.

France's bilateral support to the health sector aims to fuel a virtuous circle for the achievement of various interlinked SDGs emphasising basic education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and the empowerment of girls and women; as well as to fight inequalities, improve care for older people, and mitigate the impact of urbanisation, pollution, and climate change on the health of populations. Among others, the French Muskoka Fund (FFM) implements high-impact interventions in nine countries in West and Central Africa (**Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo**). This joint programme aims to improve the health and well-being of women, newborns, children, adolescents, and youth and the rights of women and girls. France's funding (more than EUR 150 million between 2010 and 2020, another EUR 50 million committed over 2021-2025) is part of France's overall action in favour of maternal and child health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, which amounts to EUR 400 million.

⁽⁹⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Looking ahead

Implementing SDG 3 will require unwavering effort. In this respect, the recently adopted **EU Global Health Strategy** aims to improve global health security and deliver better health for all in a changing world. The strategy aims to strengthen the EU's leadership and reassert its responsibility for tackling key global challenges and health inequalities.

Tools and legislation are in place, like **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan**, that will help build a more secure, better-prepared and more resilient EU. It will not only help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer care and support structural improvements for a more sustainable cancer pathway, but will also help reach the WHO target of a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025 as compared with 2010. In 2023, a revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive, an update of the Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments and a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers are planned.

Healthier Together will also have long-reaching impact in the field of non-communicable diseases, particularly in the five key areas: health determinants; cardiovascular diseases; diabetes; chronic respiratory diseases; and mental health and neurological disorders.

Other proposals are also being drafted, including those addressing shortages and supplies of affordable medicines and reducing the environmental impact of pharmaceuticals.

The Commission expects to table proposals to **revise EU pharmaceutical legislation** to ensure faster access to quality, safe, affordable and greener medicines in all Member States. It is also looking to revise legislation on medicines for rare diseases and paediatric care. It is also considering proposals for innovative approaches to **research** and **public procurement for antimicrobials** and their alternatives.

In addition to reviewing existing work to make it more fit for purpose, the Commission will consider new areas of action, such as ways to promote participation in the European Public Health Week and studying the impact of legislation designed to create smoke-free environments.

The Commission has also announced its intention to present in 2023 a new comprehensive approach to **mental health**. This proposal responds to the **Conference on the Future of Europe conclusions**, which call for initiatives to improve the understanding of mental health issues and ways of addressing them.

To help meet the SDG target 3.6 of halving road deaths by 2030, the Commission proposed to revise the EU's rules on driving licenses and the rules for cross-border enforcement

of road traffic offences in March 2023. The Commission is also planning to propose a revision of the EU's roadworthiness rules. All of these initiatives are expected to help bring about a reduction in preventable deaths and injuries.

On the external dimension, the EU aims to improve global health security and deliver better health for all in a changing world. The EU will continue to take actions to accelerate the strengthening of partner countries' health systems, thus contributing to achieving SDG 3 globally. The instrument **NDICI – Global Europe** will support the implementation of a range of concrete planned actions, such as the **regional Team Europe Initiatives on health** in Africa, notably the **Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines & health technology products in Africa**, which aims to deliver on the **Global Gateway strategy**.

