

An Overview of Policy Clusters





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About EPHA

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), recognised as the leading European advocacy public health NGO, is an international not-for-profit association established in Belgium in 1993.

With a mission to protect and improve public health in Europe, EPHA has grown into Europe's largest platform of civil society organisations working on health.

EPHA is active in all policy areas that affect health, either directly via health policies, or across areas that have an impact on health, including the social, economic, environmental factors, but also political and commercial determinants of health.

In its work in the public interest, EPHA is independent from commercial funding.

What sets EPHA apart from other EU public health NGOs is its membership and its audiences. EPHA can proudly claim to be a people's platform for public health – set up by people and for people.

Among its broad and versatile membership, EPHA hosts European umbrella organisations,

national and regional organisations, but also the smallest of local grass roots. Its members include organisations of (public) health professionals, researchers, educators, and patients, organisations focusing on specific diseases (like cardiovascular or cancer), or on specific health threats (like tobacco or alcohol), and, importantly, an array of organisations that represent vulnerable population groups – including children, elderly, homeless, Roma communities, people living with AIDS, and those that suffer from substance abuse or gender-based violence.

Notably, EPHA's nurses, doctors, scientists are not there to talk with each other - for that, they have their own professional associations. They are in EPHA to get involved in people's voice, to talk with people and to work for people.

The quest that unites such a diverse range of organisations is the right to health and combating exclusion or discrimination of anyone in Europe.



EPHA's Way of Working

In 2020, EPHA's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 was approved by the General Assembly, establishing a stronger focus on evidence, a more flexible & creative advocacy approach, and a focus on collaboration & partnerships - all introduced by a shift from individual campaigns that used to be a hallmark of EPHA's successful advocacy past, to clusters of overlapping policy areas. This has secured more flexibility in a changing policy environment, better adaptability to challenging public health times – which has proven invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in a time of wars and a cost of living crisis – and a higher value to members.

Policy Clusters bring together the members active in the related topics, so as to combine their collective knowledge and expertise into a single voice. Working with external partners and EPHA's Expert Advisors, this structure also ensures harnessing the best scientific evidence and knowledge, and translating it into policy recommendations and advocacy campaigns.

EPHA's seven Policy Clusters (details of each to follow in the follow up chapters) include:

- Healthy Environments
- Healthcare Delivery
- Health Equity
- Health Systems & Economy
- Global Public Health
- Digital Transformation
- Politics & Health

EPHA is proud to say that, while implementing its current Strategic Plan, the Alliance has grown to be recognised as the European lead in evidence-based public health advocacy, a successful facilitator of multisectoral discussions, and a sought-after partner at all levels.

To find out more about EPHA's Strategic Plan please visit: www.eph.org/about-us

Healthy Environments

At EPHA we have it clear: every citizen deserves an environment that enables and promotes their best health. The overwhelming impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) — from cancer, obesity, and diabetes to cardiovascular disease — underscores a critical need: prevention. These conditions dominate as Europe's primary health challenges, in terms of mortality, morbidity and costs; most NCDs share common risk factors, hence they are often preventable life-alterations and burdens to societies that we're determined to combat.

Prevention represents the heart of our mission in the Healthy Environments cluster. A cornerstone of our advocacy is the irrefutable link between nutrition and health. Access to affordable, nutritious food isn't a luxury; it's a right. Coupled with informed awareness about dietary impacts, healthier choices should be easy, obvious, and convenient for everyone. This encompasses making readily available nutritious, sustainable foods and reducing the prevalence of harmful products like tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed foods. The commercial landscape, often dictated by industry interests, plays a significant role in shaping these decisions. We firmly believe that industries must be held accountable for their influence in this arena. It's unjust to solely blame individuals for health-related choices without considering the influential commercial determinants of

health they're subjected to.

We envision a Europe where good health isn't a privilege but a norm; where every individual has access to a sustainable, high-quality health system. To achieve this, we're committed to enhance prevention, promotion, protection, and participation. As board members of the EU Food Coalition, and in collaboration with several EU-wide organizations on several EU funded projects we work to implement the concept of healthy environments within the forthcoming Sustainable Food Systems Framework (SFSF), a landmark framework expected to redefine the European food chain. Additionally, we've been active players in the work of the parliamentary subcommittee for health (SANT) providing the dimension of equity in NCD prevention and management policies in Europe.

Furthermore, within EPHA, our cross-cluster collaborations with the Global Public Health cluster and the Health Equity cluster enable us to address health from multiple, interconnected perspectives, to effectively foster the development of holistic and integrated policies that scale up prevention and health promotion.

Join us as we redefine health in Europe, championing a future where individuals are empowered, industries are responsible, and environments are conducive to optimal well-being.

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/healthy-environments>



Healthcare Delivery

Did you know that while German patients have access to all medicines approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) within 1 year, only 10% of recently approved medicines are available to patients in Latvia? In the Healthcare Delivery cluster, we believe that every citizen has the right to advanced universal health coverage and equitable access to medicines and healthcare, no matter their socio-economic status or country of origin. Health, healthcare, and access to effective and affordable treatments should be ensured in the European Union and beyond.

In this cluster, we work on what we believe should be the norm in the twenty-first century: healthcare systems that are patient-centred, medicines that are accessible and affordable, pharmaceutical sector that does not hold a monopoly, the true costs of R&D that are public and transparent, as well as those of trial costs, public procurements, and joint purchases. If a project is funded by public money, shouldn't the results be publicly available for everyone?

It goes without saying that we also fight for transparent and accountable public bodies such as the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), and for the creation of an effective and intimacy-protecting European Health Data Space (EHDS) as part of the European Health Union. If we citizens enjoy freedom of movement within the EU, why shouldn't our medical records and medical prescriptions enjoy it, too?

Right now, the European Union policymakers are discussing the next EU Pharma Strategy and legislation, which will tackle many of the truisms mentioned above, as well as coordinate the responses to current threats such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the development of (new) antibiotics. Concerned about the heavy industry influence on this process, we call for the creation of an R&D system that is driven by public health needs and delivers medicines that are universally accessible and affordable.

And we don't do it alone, because "if you want to go far, go together". We at EPHA coordinate the European Alliance for Responsible R&D and Access to Medicines, a civil society coalition gathering consumer, patient and public health organisations calling

Big asks always seem impossible until they are done. Will you join us in our big asks?

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/healthcare-delivery/>



Health Equity

In an equitable world, there would be no unfair and avoidable differences between groups of people, including in the opportunities to be in good health, the access to healthcare services, and the exposure to factors that harmfully impact health. These differences in health also bring about significant social and economic costs to not just the individuals affected, but to our healthcare systems and overall society, reinforcing and reproducing more disparities in the long run. Although health equity issues cut across all of EPHA's policy clusters, they clearly call for a dedicated stream of work.

The determinants of health cover a broad spectrum ranging from the social and economic, to the environmental and commercial. Its factors like housing and job security, safe and healthy environments, as well as social inclusion and non-discrimination that impact the opportunities to be in good health the most.

In collaboration with our members and partners, we are approaching our work on health equity from three angles: Early Childhood Development, with a focus on the most vulnerable children in society; Roma Health with a focus on capacity

building of the most left behind, taking a rights-based approach, all the while leading the Roma Health Network; and Anti-discrimination, with a focus on the multiple dimensions of structural discrimination and the impact on health inequities.

In our advocacy, we pay most attention to the underlying drivers of health equity, which include participatory processes as policies are developed, and strong and transparent accountability systems.

We are proud that EPHA has been selected to lead the Thematic Network DisQo – anti-discrimination & health equity (Oct 2022 - Jun 2023), an initiative launched by the European Commission's DG SANTE, and hosted on their EU Health Policy Platform. In collaboration with DG SANTE, DisQo organised a series of three webinars (Jan-Mar 2023) and concluded with a Joint Statement in May 2023 summarising the common position of the network.

Are you ready to take the next step for your organisation and join EPHA in the fight for health equity?

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/health-equity/>



Health Systems & Economy

In the context of COVID-19 recovery, energy crisis and the war in Ukraine, it is essential to advocate for sustained investments in health, health systems and the healthcare workforce. The aim of this cluster is also to raise awareness about the increasing consensus and evidence that health and wellbeing are not only intrinsic values but also prerequisites for economic growth and that health investments offer high returns for society.

The work of this cluster is highly relevant in the context of current poly-crisis (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine conflict), which have put public health and health systems at centre stage and showed the negative effects of decreased investments in health systems. Ongoing discussions about rebuilding better, more effective, and resilient health systems need to incorporate health and wellbeing as core principles and highlight the high returns that health investments offer for society.

In the upcoming months, the Health Systems & Economics cluster will work with EPHA members on the topic of the healthcare workforce, the shortages and challenges they are facing, and develop recommendations on the matter. Furthermore, EPHA will develop, with external support, a scoping paper on developing work on health and health systems and the economy of wellbeing. The cluster will also seek to develop advocacy on other topics, such as health systems resilience and EU budget policy.

Our latest and upcoming publications and activities include:

- A scoping paper on opportunities for engagement on health and health systems and the economy of wellbeing;
- A joint paper with EPHA members on the healthcare workforce and the challenges they are facing.

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/health-systems-and-economy/>



Global Public Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution, climate change and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) are among humanity's leading global public health threats, threats that know no borders. Europe has ambitious goals: to be the first climate neutral continent by 2050, and a world leader in tackling air pollution and AMR. The European Union and its Member States have enough resources both to lead the mitigation and adaptation changes needed for the climate transition and to set the bar high on preventing and preparing for AMR and other threats. At the same time, they can and should support implementing these solutions worldwide.

EPHA's work focuses on transforming these promises into reality. We advocate for a clean transition from a carbon-intensive society based on fossil fuels to a more inclusive and sustainable society and for the EU to take loud and effective action in the global fight against AMR. We do all of this through the lenses of One Health and Planetary Health, which takes a wider view of determinants of health, rather than an individualistic view.

More specifically, at the Global Public Health cluster we aim to improve air quality and mitigate climate change in our cities by promoting EU policy ending fossil fuel use in our everyday lives, in areas as varied as transport and heating and cooking. We also seek

to scale up AMR prevention and preparedness to save millions of lives and ensure the continued effectiveness of current healthcare practices.

As climate change visibly destabilises our planet and AMR more subtly breaks down our defence systems, we face the future with increased uncertainty and alarm.

Recent work and achievement in the cluster include advocacy in favour of a strong, ambitious Ambient Air Quality Directive, fully in line with the WHO recommendations, which was passed by the ENVI Committee in 2023. Work on clean cooking has seen EPHA's report (with CLASP) featured in over 400 articles worldwide and has created opportunities to engage with DG ENER in Consultation Forums and Stakeholder contact groups. EPHA is seen as a reliable stakeholder in AMR, including to institutions such as DG Sante, ECDC and holding the secretariat of the MEP Interest Group on AMR. Our work has seen us supported by large donors such as the Oak Foundation, Clean Air Fund and European Climate Foundation. EPHA also joined the AMR Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Platform, hosted by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and as an accredited stakeholder to WHO Europe on AMR.

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/global-public-health/>



Digital Transformation

“Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards,” Aldous Huxley, the dystopian-minded author of *Brave New World*, once remarked.

In the EPHA Digital Transformation cluster, however, we take an optimistic mindset and focus on making technological development in health work in the benefit of everyone. We coordinate our members’ work on digital health issues and highlight key policy initiatives such as the European Health Data Space. By coming together and exchanging information, knowledge, and expertise, we make our advocacy efforts more efficient. Our goal is for the digital transformation of healthcare to leave no one behind. We advocate for inclusive digital health policies, for empowering all citizens by getting digital health literacy higher on the EU political agenda, and for the ethical use of artificial intelligence and patient health data. In addition, we insist on more direct patient and patient representative involvement in the co-creation of digital health solutions in health and care. As a member of the expert advisory eHealth Stakeholder Group, EPHA provides direct input to the EU Commission on digital health issues.

Technological progress doesn’t have to end in dystopia: will you join us in ensuring a future where it makes all our lives better?

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/digital-transformation/>



Politics & Health

With a wide range of issues to cover at the intersection of Politics and Health, our work in this cluster focuses on improving EU policymaking, keeping public health at the top of the EU agenda, and ensuring that civil society has a voice in EU policymaking. Meaningful engagement of civil society in policymaking is crucial for democracy and for enhancing public trust. As a key piece of EU policymaking, we also focus on the role of the EU Better Regulation agenda.

The Politics and Health cluster has also been focusing its activity on the preparation of advocacy tools ahead of the European elections of 2024. In June 2023, EPHA's key priorities ahead of the elections were published. Further activities in that regard are planned, including a more developed version of the manifesto with key health policy issues to be tackled by the next Commission.

The Politics and Health cluster relies on the cooperation with health NGOs through the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance, which includes EPHA members and partners. The Alliance was first launched as a campaign that focused on keeping health on the EU political agenda. In 2021 and 2022, it organised a successful campaign to secure the continuation of Operating Grants for NGOs by DG

SANTE, which allowed for this funding instrument to be provided for 2022 and 2023. The Civil Society Alliance is also advocating for the engagement of civil society in EU policy-making processes, on the strengthening of social dialogue, and on the preparation of the 2024 European elections.

Our latest and upcoming publications and activities include:

- An event in the European Parliament calling for sustainable funding for civil society;
- Joint statement with the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance advocating for the sustainable funding for civil society and the continuation of Operating Grants for Health NGOs;
- EPHA's and the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance's manifestos ahead of the European elections;
- Participation in the Better Regulation for Better Health project with the University of Edinburgh;
- Preparation of further advocacy activities around the 2024 European elections.

Do you want to join us and benefit from our established advocacy platform?

Find out more: <https://epha.org/policy-clusters/politics-and-health/>



EPHA's Partnerships

EPHA also benefits from and contributes to many partnerships and stakeholders' groups convened by EU policymakers and international organizations.

These partnerships include a Memorandum of Understanding signed with WHO Europe to build upon the longstanding partnership between EPHA and WHO Europe so as to drive systemic changes and reduce health inequalities, ultimately leading to a healthier future for all people and the planet.

We are part of the following networks convened by international organisations:

- ◆ The OECD PaRIS Patient Advisory Panel
- ◆ The WHO Europe Access to Novel Medicines Platform
- ◆ The Steering Committee of the WHO Civil Society Commission

We are a member of the following stakeholders and/or advisory groups convened by EU policymakers:

- ◆ The European Medicines Agency (EMA) Patients' and Consumers' Working Party
- ◆ Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) Civil Society Advisory Forum
- ◆ e-health Stakeholders Group, European Commission
- ◆ DG AGRI Civil Dialogue Groups, European Commission
- ◆ DG SANTE NCD Initiative Advisory group, European Commission
- ◆ DG SANTE Beating Cancer Stakeholder Contact Group, European Commission
- ◆ DG SANTE Advisory group on Farm to Fork Strategy, European Commission

Project-Based Networks

EPHA cooperates with members and partners in project-based activities, such as EC-funded projects, including EU4Health Action Grants and Horizon Europe projects (including both research and coordination and support action ones), but also in projects supported by charitable foundations.

Discover more at: www.ephaprojects.org/campaigns





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