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- ETUI: A 'social imbalances procedure' for the EU
- 2021 Observatory report: Unheard, unseen and untreated: health inequalities in Europe today
- Oxford Compendium of National Legal Responses to COVID-19
- CEPS: Comparing and assessing recovery and resilience plans - Second edition
- CEPS: Recovery and Resilience Monitor
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- ESPN: Access to social protection for young people. An analysis of policies in 35 countries
- European Parliament: The European added value of the Recovery and Resilience Facility - An assessment of the Austrian, Belgian and German plans

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- European Commission: cohesion funding to support refugees in Europe (CARE)
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- European Parliament: Treaty review necessary to implement conference proposals on the future of Europe
- WTO: proposal on lifting patent rights for COVID-19 vaccines under certain conditions
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European Commission: measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic in its current phase and prepare for the next phase

In a communication, the Commission calls on Member States to remain vigilant and strengthen their surveillance, healthcare systems and overall pandemic preparedness. It calls on countries to tackle the broader health effects of the pandemic and accelerate digitalisation in health. In addition, it announces measures for resilient supply chains both for medical countermeasures and other critical products and is launching a tender to reserve capacities for vaccine production.

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European Parliament: special committee on the COVID-19 pandemic

The European Parliament has set up a special committee 'COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learned and recommendations for the future.' It will examine the European response to the pandemic in the areas of health, democracy and fundamental rights, economy and society, and the EU's global relations.

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French Presidency of the Council: development of a new European cooperation tool for health facilities and establishments

EU Health Ministers and the EU Commissioner for Health met for a high-level conference. The discussions among Member States led to ideas for a new, voluntary cooperation tool for health facilities and establishments, which could take the form of a 'European Hospital Label.'

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European Commission: scientific opinion on cancer screening in Europe

As part of the EU Beating Cancer Plan, the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (GCSA) issued an opinion on cancer screening in Europe. In the advisory, the advisors make recommendations to improve existing screening programmes and recommend expanding them to lung and prostate cancer. The opinion will inform the Commission's forthcoming proposal to update the 2003 Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening.

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JA ImpleMENTAL: implementing best practices in mental health

This Joint Action (JA), funded by the European Commission, involves government agencies from several Member States. The aim is to exchange experiences on best practice in the field of mental health. One of the specific subprojects aims to transfer elements of the Belgian reform of mental health (MH) care with the establishment of community-based MH care service networks and implement them as a pilot.

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EU Council: strengthen cooperation on rare diseases

The ministers discussed whether it would be useful to strengthen cooperation and coordination on rare diseases between Member States and at EU level. In particular, ministers discussed the role of the future European Health Data Space. Access to high-quality health data within a safe framework could also help make new, safer, personalised treatment accessible sooner.

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EU Council: green light to start negotiations on international pandemic treaty

The Council adopted a decision to authorise the opening of negotiations for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The decision also clears the way for negotiating complementary amendments to the International Health Regulations, which create rights and obligations for countries, including the obligation to report health events.

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European Commission: start of negotiations on a transatlantic programme to beat the global pandemic

The European Commission plans to negotiate, on behalf of the EU, a non-binding instrument with the United States; a programme to beat the global COVID-19 pandemic. It was submitted to the 27 ambassadors of the Member States to the EU (Coreper), who launched a written procedure to approve the opening of negotiations.

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European Commission: report on the operation of the EU Directive on cross-border health care

The Commission published a report on the operation of Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border health care. The report confirms that patients' rights in cross-border health care are well protected, but that patients still encounter problems when seeking treatment abroad.

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2 Medicinal products and medical devices

EU Health Policy Platform: joint statement on an inclusive and equitable pharmaceutical strategy for the European Union

This joint statement 'Towards an inclusive and equitable pharmaceutical strategy for the European Union' sets out precise and operational recommendations structured into five different calls for action. It was drawn up by one of three thematic networks, selected for 2021 by the European Commission for the EU Health Policy Platform. The network was led by the Interest Group on Supranational Biolaw of the European Association of Health Law (EAHL). It was presented at the annual meeting of the EU Health Policy Platform.

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French Presidency of the Council: manifesto for an important project of common European interest (IPCEI) on health

16 Member States announced the signing of a manifesto for an IPCEI on health. The projects that will receive support during 2022 focus on three policy areas: (i) developing innovative and greener technologies and production processes for manufacturing medicines; (ii) innovating with regard to strategic challenges such as fighting antibiotic resistance, developing treatments for rare diseases, and responding to future pandemics; and (iii) developing gene and cell therapies.

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European Commission: strategic reserves for chemical, biological and radio-nuclear (CBRN) emergencies

To improve the EU's preparedness and response to public health risks such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats, the Commission is building up strategic reserves through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (RescEU) in close collaboration with the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). This stockpile will consist of equipment and medicines, vaccines and other therapeutics to treat patients exposed to CBRN emergencies agents, as well as of rescEU decontamination reserve.

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European Commission: Implementation rolling plan for the Regulation on health technology assessment

The Implementation rolling plan lists the main activities that the European Commission has carried out or intends to carry out in preparation for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2282 on Health Technology Assessment. The plan is subject to regular review in order to provide national authorities, health technology developers and stakeholders with the most updated information.

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European Commission: guidelines to identify and support new treatments for COVID-19

The Commission published the 'COVID-19 Therapeutics Innovation Booster'. The guidelines in this report focus on facilitating the development of COVID-19 treatments. The Therapeutics Innovation Booster aims to facilitate the identification of promising research projects and technologies in different stages of development, to best focus efforts and provide guidance to researchers and innovators, in order to accelerate innovation.

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European Commission: a single procedure for the granting of supplementary protection certificates (SPCs) for medicinal products

Supplementary protection certificates (SPCs) are intellectual property rights extending patent protection for specific medicinal and plant protection products. Differences between EU countries in its administration and enforcement create inefficiencies. The Commission requested input on an impact assessment on the introduction of a unitary SPC with a single procedure for the granting of SPCs.

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European Parliament and Council: measures to ensure supply of medicines from Great Britain to Northern Ireland approved

The proposals ensure the continued long-term supply of medicines from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and address outstanding supply concerns in Cyprus, Ireland and Malta – markets that have been historically supplied through or by Great Britain.

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European Court of Auditors: auditors examining intellectual property protection in the EU

Intellectual property rights (IPRs) provide an incentive for innovation, creativity and technological development and offer protection against counterfeiting and piracy. Counterfeiting and piracy are a growing problem, particularly for sectors where EU companies are world leaders, such as pharmaceuticals. The purpose of the audit is to ascertain whether these IPRs are properly protected within the single market.

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EMA: advice on the designation of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) published scientific advice in the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR). It contains expert recommendations on antimicrobials to be reserved for treatment of infections in humans, as the use of antimicrobials in animals contributes to the development of AMR. The analysis paves the way for the adoption of legislation in which the antimicrobials that will be reserved for humans will be designated.

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Euractiv: critical reactions to EMA advice on antimicrobial agents

According to Euractiv, the initial response to the EMA's recommendations was mixed. While the advice was welcomed by the European Commission, critical voices were heard in the European Parliament and among several stakeholder groups.

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EMA: Executive Steering Group on Shortages and Safety of Medicinal Products set up (MSSG)

The role of this steering group, set up by the EMA, is to ensure a robust response to medicine supply issues caused by major events or public-health emergencies. It coordinates urgent actions within the European Union (EU) to manage medicine supply issues and issues related to the quality, safety and efficacy of medicines.

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EMA: EU common standard for electronic product information for medicines

Electronic product information (ePI) refers to the authorised, statutory product information for medicines (including the summary of product characteristics, package leaflet and labelling) adapted for handling in electronic format. The EU ePI common standard presents this information in a semi-structured format. It was developed by EMA, together with national competent authorities and the European Commission. In 2022, a pilot project will test the use of ePI prior to implementation.

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3 e-Health

European Parliament and Council: adoption of the regulation on European Data Governance

The Data Governance Act (DGA) will set up robust mechanisms to facilitate the reuse of certain categories of protected public-sector data, increase trust in data intermediation services and foster data altruism across the EU. The regulation does not impose an obligation on public entities to allow reuse of data. The regulation also applies to health data, while the regulation states that for the exchange of such data, due to their highly sensitive nature, additional conditions may be laid down in the context of the European Health Data Space. The conditions for transferring such data to third countries must be set out in delegated acts.

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European Commission: proposal for a European Health Data Space

The European Health Data Space will provide a trustworthy setting for secure access to and processing of a wide range of health data. The initiative will enable individuals to take control of their own health data. It will foster a single market for digital health services and products, and offer a reliable framework for the use of health data for research, innovation and policy-making.

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European Parliament and Council: 2030 policy programme - Path to the Digital Decade

The Parliamentary Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the governance system 'policy programme 2030 - Path to the Digital Decade.' Member States in the Council also voted the mandate to enter into negotiations. The path will set EU-wide digital targets to be achieved by 2030, via a joint effort by Member States and the Union level. One of the goals is to ensure that democratic life and public services are fully accessible online for everyone and that all EU citizens have access to their medical e-records.

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European Commission: draft declaration on digital rights and principles

The Commission is proposing to the European Parliament and Council to sign up to a declaration of rights and principles that will guide the digital transformation in the EU. The draft declaration contains rights and principles for the digital transformation. For example, it proposes that everyone throughout the Union should have access to all key government services, including access to digital health and care services, including medical records.

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European Commission: study on health data, digital health and artificial intelligence in healthcare

This study investigates cross-border provision of digital health services and goods (eHealth), artificial intelligence and the use of health data, and makes recommendations for policy on them.

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French Presidency: European principles for ethics in digital health

Proposed by the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 16 European principles for ethics in digital health, reflecting European values, were adopted with rapid consensus. The principles incorporate four ethical dimensions: 'placing digital health within a framework of humanist values', 'enabling people to manage their own health data digitally', 'developing inclusive digital health', and 'implementing eco-friendly digital health'.

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European Parliament: resolution on artificial intelligence in a digital age

The resolution argues that the public debate on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) should focus on the enormous potential the technology presents. The MEPs identified policy options that could unlock the potential of AI across a number of sectors, with a focus on the health sector and personalised medicine. The EU should give priority to international cooperation with like-minded partners to safeguard fundamental rights and minimise new technological threats.

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4 Social policy

Council: Joint Employment Report for 2022 approved

In the context of the European Semester 2022, the Council adopted the Joint Employment Report 2022 and approved conclusions. In the area of health care, this report asks Member States to:

- invest more in the capacity of their health-care systems, including primary care, coordination of care, healthcare staff, and e-Health.
- reduce out-of-pocket payments, improve healthcare coverage, and promote up-skilling and re-skilling of health workers.

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European Commission: attracting skills and talent to the EU

The Commission presented a new package on legal migration to the EU, aimed at improving the stay of long-term residents and facilitating a single work and residence permit. The Commission invites Member States to consider the possibility of opening new programmes in sectors with significant labour shortages. It proposes talent partnerships at the EU level between Member States with partner countries in different sectors, such as health and long-term care.

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European Commission: coordination of social security systems at a glance - statistical report 2021

The report explains the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the coordination of social security systems. The report notes that the decline in intra-EU tourism led to a strong decrease (-30%) in unplanned cross-border health care.

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ACSH: Member States, workers and employers agree on the need to recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease

Member States, workers and employers in the EU Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work (ACSH) reached an agreement on the need to recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease in health and social care and in domiciliary assistance and, in a pandemic context, in sectors where there is an outbreak in activities with proven risk of infection. They also agreed to update the EU list of occupational diseases.

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5 Economic policy

European Commission: 2022 European Semester Spring Package

In its communication on the Spring Package, the Commission identifies a number of common challenges, including the digital transformation, social inequalities, labour market shortages, the flow of refugees from Ukraine, and the sustainability of public debt. In the health sector, this translates into the need to: invest in digital technology; improve the resilience, quality and accessibility of health systems; address health workforce shortages and ensure the long-term fiscal sustainability of health systems.

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European Commission: European Semester country reports

The Spring Package also includes country reports which analyse existing and emerging challenges by country, as well as the resilience of individual Member States in addressing these challenges. The country reports assess the implementation of previous country-specific recommendations and the measures included in the recovery and resilience plan of the respective Member State. Challenges in the health sector are also addressed in the reports.

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European Commission: European Semester country specific recommendations

The Spring Package also presents country-specific recommendations. These provide guidance to Member States on how to respond to existing and emerging challenges and deliver on the shared core policy objectives. Eight Member States received a country-specific recommendation for health-care reform. The Commission Communication (in Appendix 1, p. 17) provides an overview of these countries.

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European Commission: country-specific recommendation for Belgium to reform long-term care

The European Commission asks that Belgium prioritise cost-saving measures in long-term care, particularly by preventing and delaying unnecessary or premature admission to a care institution. According to the Commission, one in four people are admitted too early to residential care. At the same time, the Commission calls for strengthening the use of high-quality home care services and addressing financial barriers that limit access to these services for the most vulnerable.

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European Commission: monitoring report on progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs)

The 2022 European Semester cycle also evaluates the progress towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Eurostat published a monitoring report providing statistics on the trends related to the SDGs. According to this report, the EU has made good progress toward the health and well-being goals (SDG 3). The country reports (listed above) evaluate each Member State's progress in implementing the SDGs.

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European Commission: guidelines for the employment policies of Member States

In the context of the 2022 European Semester Spring Package, the Commission also proposes guidelines for the employment policies of Member States. The guidelines lay down how to further modernise labour market institutions, education and training, and social protection and health-care systems to make them more equitable and inclusive.

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European Commission: 14th enhanced surveillance report - Greece

The European Commission adopted the 14th report on enhanced surveillance for Greece. The report assesses Greece's progress on the policy commitments made at the Eurogroup of June 2018. The report also evaluates implemented and planned health care reforms.

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European Commission: post-programme surveillance reports for Ireland, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal

The European Commission approves the post-programme surveillance reports for Ireland, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal. The reports conclude that the repayment capacity of each of the Member States in question remains sound. The reports for Cyprus and Portugal also evaluate the financial situation of these countries' health systems, and implemented and planned health-care reforms.

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European Commission: summary of responses to the online public consultation on the review of the EU economic governance framework

Many respondents to the public survey on the future of the EU economic governance framework believe that fiscal policy should become more growth-friendly, take social issues more into account, and support policy priorities for both the green and digital transition.

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6 Health services in the internal market

European Commission: public consultation on a new EU instrument to guarantee functioning of single market during emergencies

The Commission proposes a regulation to establish a Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI) to respond quickly to emergencies and crises that threaten the functioning of the single market. The initiative will ensure the coordination, solidarity and coherence of the EU crisis response, ensuring: continued free movement of goods, services & people, smooth-running supply chains, and availability and access to goods & services. The Commission submitted this proposal to a public consultation

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7 EU funding

European Parliament: resolution on cohesion policy as an instrument to reduce healthcare disparities

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on cohesion policy as an instrument to reduce healthcare inequalities and enhance cross-border health cooperation. According to the Parliament, a more structured approach at EU level, complemented by a stronger and more comprehensive legal framework and legally binding means of action, is needed to strengthen cooperation and coordination between Member States, to better protect citizens' health and to effectively address existing healthcare disparities.

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European Commission: launch of a platform with information on projects with funding from the structural funds

The new public 'Kohesio' platform allows citizens to search standardised information on more than 1.5 million projects that received support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) in the 2014-2020 programming period. Although health care is not an explicit theme in these programmes, various healthcare projects are supported, for example under the themes social inclusion or research and development.

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European Commission: first annual report on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

The European Commission approved its first annual report on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the centrepiece of NextGenerationEU. The RRF is providing up to €723.8 billion of grants and loans to Member States to support transformative investments and reforms that will enable the EU to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare initiatives are also eligible for funding from this facility, within the different pillars, such as digital transformation.

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European Commission: €107.3 million to support the recovery in France, Germany and the Netherlands

Regions in France, Germany and the Netherlands are receiving additional grants of €107.3 million under the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) to support economic recovery and boost the digital and green transitions. Of this, €18 million will go to the Hessen region in Germany to improve the innovation infrastructure at universities, university hospitals and non-university research institutions.

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European Commission: Sweden's recovery and resilience plan endorsed

This is a key step paving the way for the EU to disburse €3.3 billion in grants to Sweden under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). In the healthcare area, the Swedish plan includes measures to increase the accessibility and capacity of the health-care system, in particular through training of elderly care providers, increasing the number of study places in Vocational Education and Training, with a focus on health and social care, and through introducing a protected title for assistant nurses.

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European Commission: REACT-EU funding to Finland for new health-care products

The European Commission has awarded a total of €84.3 million to Finland, Germany and Latvia under REACT-EU to support the recovery from the pandemic and the greening and digitalisation of their economies. In Finland, the funds will be invested in the digitalisation of public and industrial sectors, green growth and new health-care products, among other things.

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European Commission: Bulgaria's recovery and resilience plan endorsed

The European Commission has endorsed Bulgaria's recovery and resilience plan. The €6.3 billion funding will support the implementation of crucial investment and reform measures. Bulgaria's plan includes measures to modernise hospitals and medical facilities, establish an air ambulance system, construct outpatient care units in remote areas and under-served regions and address shortages of healthcare professionals across the country.

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European Commission: partnership agreement with Czechia adopted

The Commission adopted its Partnership Agreement with Czechia, laying down the country's cohesion policy investment strategy worth €21.4 billion for the period 2021-2027. Of this, €4.4 billion is earmarked to support employment, skills and social inclusion, including improving the availability of social services and access to healthcare services in underserved areas and for the most disadvantaged groups of the population.

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European Commission: partnership agreement with Lithuania adopted

This Partnership Agreement lays down Lithuania's investment strategy worth €6.4 billion in cohesion policy funding for the period 2021-2027. More than €1.8 billion of the funds will be allocated to promote social cohesion. They will be used to reduce poverty and income inequality and improve access to social and healthcare services, as recommended in the 2020 country specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester.

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European Parliament: resolution on the general guidelines for the preparation of the 2023 budget

In the resolution, the Parliament calls for a stronger health union. It urges that the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) be given new resources, otherwise the achievement of other important health objectives will be jeopardized. It also points to the need to better coordinate the activities of the various programmes that support healthcare systems and reduce disparities in access to health care.

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European Commission: Horizon Europe budget boosted

The Commission has adopted the amendment to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, increasing the budget by nearly €562 million to further support EU Missions towards innovative solutions to green, health and digital challenges and more actions to boost the European innovation ecosystem. The programme's budget for 2021 and 2022 now reaches a total of nearly €16 billion. Of this, €129.56 million will be spent on fighting cancer.

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8 Competition

Commission partially refers acquisition of a part of McKesson by Phoenix to France's competition authority and clears proposed merger outside France

The European Commission has partially referred the proposed acquisition of a part of McKesson by Phoenix to the French competition authority ('Autorité de la concurrence'), at its request. The Commission approved unconditionally the proposed transaction outside France. Phoenix and McKesson are active in the wholesale and retail distribution of pharmaceutical goods in several European countries.

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9 Infringement proceedings

Ten Member States: transposing EU rules on open data and the reuse of public sector information

The European Commission sent reasoned opinions to Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Sweden asking to communicate information about how EU rules on open data and the reuse of public sector data are transposed in national law. Healthcare data may also fall within the scope.

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Estonia, Italy, Croatia, Portugal and Slovenia: national programme for radioactive waste management not in line with EU rules

The Commission requested Estonia, Italy, Croatia, Portugal and Slovenia to bring their national programmes for radioactive waste management into compliance with the Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Directive (Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom). Radioactive waste is generated from the production of electricity in nuclear power plants, but also from the non-power-related use of radioactive materials for medical, research, industrial and agricultural purposes.

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Italy: transposition of EU radiation protection legislation

The Commission requested Italy to implement a judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union on transposition of EU radiation protection legislation. The Court found that Italy had not transposed the revised Basic Safety Standards Directive (Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom). The Directive lays down basic safety standards to protect the general public, workers and patients against the dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation.

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Portugal: transposition of EU radiation protection legislation

The Commission referred Portugal to the Court of Justice of the European Union over EU radiation protection legislation. According to the Commission, Portugal has also not fully transposed the revised Basic Safety Standards Directive.

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Romania and Slovenia: transposition of the EU rules on open data and public sector data reuse

The European Commission asked Romania and Slovenia to communicate information about how EU rules on open data and the reuse of public sector data (Directive (EU) 2019/1024) are transposed in national law. The directive aims to unlock the benefits of data and helps to make more of the vast and valuable pool of data resources produced by the public sector available for reuse. It stimulates the development of innovative solutions, increases transparency by opening the access to publicly funded research data, and supports new technologies, including artificial intelligence.

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10 Court of Justice of the European Union

Judgment: VAT exemption for private hospitals

In its judgment in Case C-228/20, the Court stated that national legislation providing that a private hospital is, under certain conditions, exempt from value added tax (VAT) for healthcare services provided is contrary to the EU VAT Directive if comparable private hospitals providing similar services are treated differently. It is up to the competent authorities of a Member State to determine whether the healthcare services provided by a private hospital are provided under social conditions comparable with those applicable to bodies governed by public law.

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Judgment: link between right to reside and health insurance

In its judgment in Case C-247/20, the Court stated that neither the child who is a citizen of the Union and has acquired a permanent right to reside nor the parent who is the primary carer of the child must have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in order to retain the right to reside in the host Member State. However, during the periods before the child obtains permanent residence in the host country, both the child and the parent must have comprehensive sickness insurance cover.

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Judgment: conditions for obtaining authorisation to pursue the profession of doctor independently in the host Member State

The Court ruled in Case C-634/20 that national legislation which limits the right to practise as a self-employed doctor in the host Member State to a period of three years and makes it conditional on exercising the function under the supervision of an accredited doctor and successfully completing a three-year specific training course in general medical practice is contrary to Union law.

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Judgment: appropriate remuneration for specialist medical training

According to the Court in Case C-590/20, for any medical specialist training which began before the entry into force of Directive 82/76/EEC and continuing after the date of expiry of the period prescribed for its transposition, appropriate remuneration must be paid for the period of training from 1 January 1983 until the end of the training, provided that such training relates to a medical specialism existing in two or more Member States.

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Judgment: social security legislation applicable to flight and cabin crew

According to the Court in Case C-33/21, the social security legislation applicable to the flight and cabin crew of an airline established in a Member State who are not covered by E101 forms and who work for 45 minutes a day in a crew room, available to that airline in the territory of another Member State, where such flight and cabin crew live, and who spend the rest of their working time on board that airline's aircraft, is the legislation of the latter Member State.

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11 Publications

Bruegel: Does Europe need a Health Union?

This policy contribution, written by Anne Bucher at the request of the French Presidency of the Council, assesses the rationale for a European Health Union. It provides a historical perspective on health provisions in the European Union treaties and gives an overview of the achievements of EU health policies. It then explores the need for an overall health strategy and identifies the areas that would benefit from closer integration.

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Eurohealth: Commercial determinants of cancer control policy

This Eurohealth special issue seeks to understand the commercial determinants of cancer control policy. This relates to private-sector activities that affect the health of populations. The articles present the dimensions of the commercial determinants and how to govern them along the cancer continuum - from prevention and screening, through integrated treatment and palliative care - to provide a potentially useful descriptive and analytical basis for governments and the international community.

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OBS: Everything you always wanted to know about European Union health policies, but were afraid to ask

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (OBS) published a fully revised edition of the book 'Everything you always wanted to know about European Union health policies but were afraid to ask.' It provides a broad and up-to-date assessment and analysis of European Union public health policy.

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OBS: What are the implications of policies increasing the transparency of prices paid for pharmaceuticals?

This policy brief analyses the impact of policy measures on net price transparency for pharmaceuticals. According to the authors, increasing transparency in the pharmaceutical system will require greater European and international collaboration. It also demands a clear focus on maintaining access, innovation and sustainability. Recent experience with joint purchasing, such as in the case of the COVID-19 vaccines, may bolster similar initiatives in future.

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ETUI: A 'social imbalances procedure' for the EU

This paper, published by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), argues that the EU social governance toolbox should urgently be strengthened. It discusses the conditions for and added value of setting up an EU Social Imbalances Procedure. Health care is one of the areas of social policy to which the procedure could be applied.

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2021 Observatory report: Unheard, unseen and untreated: health inequalities in Europe today

The European Observatory of 'Médecins du Monde' published its 2021 report 'Unheard, unseen and untreated: health inequalities in Europe today.' It is an observatory report on the individuals excluded from mainstream health care in Europe. The report includes data and testimonials collected from Médecins du Monde programmes in seven European countries.

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Oxford Compendium of National Legal Responses to COVID-19

The 'Oxford Compendium of National Legal Responses to COVID-19' is a global academic collaboration mapping legal responses to COVID-19 in dozens of participating countries and territories. Each entry is structured identically and explores the role of public law, institutional adaptation, public health measures, social and labour policy, and human rights measures introduced or applied as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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CEPS: Comparing and assessing recovery and resilience plans - Second edition

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) publication 'Comparing and assessing recovery and resilience plans - Second edition' analyses the potential of recovery plans in Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, Slovakia, Austria and Belgium in effectively achieving their stated goals. This updated document introduces new insights on how far the plans cover entirely new investments or are being simply earmarked for previously budgeted expenditure.

DOC [EN](#) HTML

CEPS: Recovery and Resilience Monitor

The Recovery and Resilience Monitor is an initiative of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) offering clear insights on the implementation of the EU's recovery and resilience plans to policy makers, analysts and observers. The key focus of this project is on the economic and fiscal implications and stability of the RRF.

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OECD: Private health insurance spending

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Focus on "Private health insurance spending," private health insurance is an important source of health care financing in many OECD countries, after government schemes, social health insurance and out-of-pocket payments. On average, it finances one in every ten USD spent on health across the OECD, but this average masks considerable cross-country variation.

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ESPN: Access to social protection for young people. An analysis of policies in 35 countries

The report 'Access to social protection for young people. An analysis of policies in 35 countries,' was published by the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) at the request of the European Commission. It provides a factual overview of the access for young people to social protection schemes for five categories of cash benefits in the ESPN countries, including an overview of the main gaps/obstacles in accessing these schemes.

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European Parliament: The European added value of the Recovery and Resilience Facility - An assessment of the Austrian, Belgian and German plans

The study 'The European added value of the Recovery and Resilience Facility - An assessment of the Austrian, Belgian and German plans' conducts an in-depth analysis of the national recovery and resilience plans (NRRPs) of Austria, Belgium and Germany. The report examines alignment with EU objectives, the additionality of the spending, and the cross-border effects. The analysis also covers investments in the health sector.

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12 War in Ukraine

European Commission: support to Member States hosting refugees from Ukraine

The European Commission outlined the actions being taken to support Member States in meeting the needs of those fleeing the war in Ukraine. Thanks to a solidarity mechanism, people in urgent need of specialised hospital treatment can be quickly transferred between Member States for such treatments, with 10,000 beds already available. Through HERA, the Commission also supports the supply of vaccines, with a particular focus on childhood vaccination.

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European Commission: operational guidelines to apply the Temporary Protection Directive

The Temporary Protection Directive provides immediate protection and a clear legal status to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The Commission presented operational guidelines to support Member States in applying the directive. According to the guidelines, all children fleeing from the war, regardless of their status, should have full protection and swift access to their specific rights, including education, health care, psychosocial assistance.

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European Commission: cohesion funding to support refugees in Europe (CARE)

The Commission has adopted a proposal for Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE). This will allow a swift reallocation of available cohesion policy funding to such emergency support. Member States may use this funding to develop tailor-made solutions for the long-term integration of people with a migrant background through investments in basic services, including health care.

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European Commission: React-EU pre-financing for Member States hosting refugees from Ukraine

To help Member States hosting war refugees from Ukraine, the Commission proposes increasing the total pre-financing from the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (React-EU) by €3.4 billion. The aim is to accelerate Member States' access to resources for infrastructure, housing, equipment and services for employment, education, social inclusion, health and child care.

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European Commission: solidarity mechanism for intra-EU medical transfers of refugees and displaced persons in need of health care

To alleviate the pressure on the healthcare systems of the Member States bordering Ukraine, a special mechanism has been set up within the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) through which EU Member States can request support for the transfer of patients in need of medical care. The mechanism will help match the transfer needs of patients in neighbouring EU Member States with the supply and capacity for treatment and care available in hospitals in other EU Member States.

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Informal Council of Health Ministers: EU response to the health consequences of the war in Ukraine

The ministers debated a coordinated and inclusive EU response to the health consequences of the war in Ukraine. At the heart of the discussion was the medical treatment of refugees suffering from chronic and acute illnesses in border states or Member States hosting refugees and people displaced by war. Ministers also discussed resilience of the health systems of all EU Member States, already significantly hit by the COVID-19 crisis and now facing a new - and potentially longer lasting - health crisis.

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European Commission: recommendation on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine

The recommendation calls on Member States to adopt the academic and professional recognition of qualifications required to practice a regulated profession - including most health professions - in 'short order.' The recommendation also provides guidance on how to verify the training of those involved and expedite the recognition of diplomas.

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European Commission: €9 million for mental health assistance of refugees from Ukraine

The European Commission has mobilised €9 million from the EU4Health Programme to assist people fleeing Ukraine in urgent need of mental health and trauma support services. This additional EU funding will allow the International Federation of Red Cross Societies and non-governmental organisations to support healthcare professionals to carry out their work.

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European Commission: Technical Support Instrument to help Member States support people fleeing the war in Ukraine

In the context of the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), the Commission will offer technical expertise to help nine Member States welcome people who flee the war in Ukraine. These are Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. It will help Member States with the absorption of EU funds for reception and integration purposes, including providing access to health care.

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European Commission: medical evacuation operation transfers Ukrainian children from Poland to Italy

The EU coordinated the first MEDEVAC operation by transferring 3 chronically ill paediatric patients from Poland to Italy. The operation was financially and operationally supported by the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU's Early Warning and Response System. The operation was carried out by an Italian medical team at the request of and in close cooperation with Poland.

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European Parliament: resolution for protecting women refugees from violence and sexual exploitation

Members of the European Parliament express their deep concern about the growing number of reports of human trafficking, sexual violence, exploitation, rape and abuse faced by women and children fleeing Ukraine. They call on the EU and all host and transit countries to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), particularly emergency contraception and abortion care, including for victims of rape, as well as obstetric care.

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13 **Miscellaneous**

Informal European Council: reduce strategic dependencies towards building European sovereignty

The heads of state and government adopted the 'Versailles Declaration,' emphasising among other things the importance of reducing strategic dependencies in critical sectors, including health care. In the health sector, they will focus on supporting innovation and sustainable European production of affordable medicines, fast-tracking the registration of European suppliers, financing research and development and building production capacity for critical products to respond to health crises, including through HERA, and making Europe a leader in biomedicines.

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European Council: conclusions

The European Council calls for work to be taken forward on the implementation of the 'Versailles Declaration' on strengthening the EU. The EU leaders call for reducing the EU's strategic dependencies in the most sensitive areas such as critical raw materials, semi-conductors, health, digital and food, and by pursuing an ambitious and robust trade policy, as well as by fostering investment.

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Conference on the future of Europe: report on the final outcome

Based on the discussion in citizen panels, 49 proposals on the future of Europe were put forward. In the area of health, the Conference called for, among other things: adequate working conditions and training standards for health workers; strategic autonomy at the EU level for medicines and medical devices; a Treaty review such that health competencies become shared competencies between the EU and EU Member States; and investment in health systems.

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European Parliament: Treaty review necessary to implement conference proposals on the future of Europe

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe, by a show of hands. Parliament acknowledges that the 'ambitious and constructive proposals' that came out of the Conference require Treaty changes. To this end, it is asking the Committee on Constitutional Affairs to prepare proposals to reform the EU Treaties. This would be through a Convention. MEPs called for the European Pillar of Social Rights to be implemented fully.

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WTO: proposal on lifting patent rights for COVID-19 vaccines under certain conditions

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala put forward on 3 May the outcome document that emerged from the informal process conducted by the European Union, India, South Africa and the United States for an intellectual property response to COVID-19. Various European and international civil society organisations and experts have criticised the document for placing the interests of pharmaceutical companies above the needs of global health. The proposal will now go for consideration of the 164 WTO members.

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European Commission: EU-wide rules to combat violence against women and domestic violence

The proposed Directive will criminalise rape based on lack of consent, female genital mutilation and cyber violence. Victims would have the right to claim full compensation from offenders for damages, including the costs of health care, support services, lost income, physical and psychological harm.

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Council of Europe: 2021 conclusions on health, social security and social protection

The Council of Europe's European Committee on Social Rights published its conclusions 2021. The Committee pointed to weaknesses in the health system, while public healthcare expenditure remains too low in certain countries and the right to access to health care is not guaranteed sufficiently. The Committee did however note that some countries have adopted measures to strengthen access to health care for the homeless.

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European Ombudsman: EU administration at critical point in treatment of 'revolving doors'

The European Commission risks undermining the integrity of the EU administration without a more robust approach to the movement of staff to the private sector, the Ombudsman concluded following a broad inquiry into 'revolving doors'. It also makes recommendations to improve the situation.

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Sustainable Finance Platform: final report on social taxonomy

As a standing expert group of the European Commission, the Sustainable Finance Platform assists the Commission in the development of its policy on sustainable finance, in particular the further development of the EU taxonomy. In this report, it proposes a structure for a social taxonomy within the current EU legislative framework on sustainable finance and governance. Access to health care is also part of the objectives.

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Council and European Parliament: provisional agreement on strengthening EU-wide cybersecurity and resilience

The Council and the European Parliament agreed on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, to further improve the resilience and incident response capacities of both the public and private sector and the EU as a whole. NIS2 will set the baseline for cybersecurity risk management measures and reporting obligations across all sectors that are covered by the directive. It also covers the healthcare industry, for example, medical device manufacturers.

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“European Health Care News”

is an electronic newsletter published by the European Social Observatory (OSE), commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI).

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