Horizon Europe – Cluster 1: Health

What is Horizon Europe?

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts Europe's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better sharing of knowledge and technologies.

It also creates jobs, fully engages Europe's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

For information on UK participation in the programme see UKRO's **dedicated factsheet**.

What are clusters in Horizon Europe?

The 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' pillar of Horizon Europe will take forward the current societal challenges and industrial technologies in a more 'top-down' approach, addressing EU and global policy challenges. These challenges and opportunities will be integrated into six clusters - each with a number of specific intervention areas - designed to incentivise cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, cross-policy and international collaboration. In terms of addressing global political priorities, each cluster will contribute towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and many SDGs will be supported by more than one cluster.

The clusters and their intervention areas are expected to achieve greater impact when compared to the societal challenges of Horizon 2020 since they will cut across classical boundaries between disciplines and address different types of challenges. The integrated clusters of activities will derive from the **First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2021-24** and **Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2025-27** and will form the basis for support to collaborative research and innovation projects under the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' pillar.

What is funded under Cluster 1?

Cluster 1 has an overall budget of €8.246 billion. This funding is used to support four impact areas of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- Good health and high-quality accessible healthcare
- A resilient EU prepared for emerging threats
- High-quality digital services for all
- Competitive and secure data-economy

A wide range of call topics are aimed at improving and protecting the health of society, by developing innovative solutions to prevent, diagnose, monitor, treat and cure diseases. Cluster 1 focuses on mitigating health risks, protecting populations and promoting good health, as well as on making public health systems more cost-effective and sustainable. Selected R&I projects will also support the post-Covid-19 Recovery Plan – making EU society more resilient and European health systems better prepared for any future public health emergency.

The work programme for 2023-2024 calls contribute to establishing four new European Co-funded Partnerships in the following thematic areas: rare diseases, personalised medicine, anti-microbial resistance, and European pandemic preparedness. In the future, these partnerships between national funders and the European Commission will be organising their own calls for proposals.

More specifically, Cluster 1 contributes to six expected impacts set out in the Strategic Plan, which are the six destinations of the Work Programme 2023-2024 described below:

Destination 1 - Staying healthy in a rapidly changing society

- Focuses on major societal challenges: obesity, ageing and demographic change, mental health, digital empowerment in health literacy, and personalised prevention. It also aims at providing evidences and methodologies for better strategies and tools (including with a use of AI) for preventing diseases and promoting health.

Destination 2 - Living and working in a health-promoting environment

- Aims at filling knowledge gaps in the understanding of the impacts on health of environmental, occupational and socio-economic risk factors such as air pollution, chemicals, electromagnetic fields, urbanisation, climate changes, socio-economic inequalities, and changing working environments.

Destination 3 - Tackling diseases and reducing disease burden

- Focuses on communicable (incl. antimicrobial resistant) and non-communicable diseases (incl. neurodegenerative and mental illnesses). Activities, with strong international cooperation, will develop new prevention measures, public health interventions, diagnostics, vaccines, therapies, alternatives to antibiotics.

Destination 4 - Ensuring access to innovative, sustainable and high-quality health care

- Supports health care systems in their transformation to ensure fair access to high quality services for all. Activities will concern the innovative solutions in various dimensions: governance, financing, human and physical resources, health service provision, and patient empowerment; as well as improved evidence-based health policies.

Destination 5 - Unlocking the full potential of new tools, technologies and digital solutions for a healthy society

- Promotes the use of emerging and disruptive technologies and health data for treatments, medicines, medical devices and improved health outcomes, with a strong consideration for safety, effectiveness, appropriateness, accessibility, and fiscal sustainability as well as issues of public trust, ethical, legal and regulatory nature.

Destination 6 - Maintaining an innovative, sustainable and globally competitive health-related industry

- Focuses on the uptake of breakthrough innovations to make the EU more resilient and less dependent from imports with regard to the access and supply to critical health technologies. Promotes safe and greener pharmaceuticals and technologies and supports R&I integrating various stakeholders (medical technologies, pharmaceuticals, biotechnologies, digital health solutions) and providing regulators with interdisciplinary approaches to assess new health technologies and interventions.

Call timings

The 2023 and 2024 calls are now closed.

Under the 2023-2024 work programme, Cluster 1 had a mix of 44 one and two-stage research and innovation topics. All two-stage topics in the work programme 2023-24 were part of the blind evaluation pilot, which means that during the first stage, the applicants' identities were not revealed to the expert evaluators.

For nine 2023-2024 topics, the Commission used the lump sum funding model.

Please note that some topics have specific eligibility criteria, listed under the eligibility and admissibility conditions, such as the obligation to include legal entities established in the target country/region. Applicants are advised to check the work programme for details relating to their topics of interest.

As an exception from any other part of Horizon Europe, and in recognition of the opening of the US National Institutes of Health's programmes to European researchers, any legal entity established in the United States of America is eligible to receive EU funding in projects funded under Cluster 1.

Relevant EU policy areas and developments

Cluster 1 is linked to multiple European Commission's political priorities, in particular the agenda for a **European Health Union** - the recent proposal to enhance EU preparedness and response to health crises, building on lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic. The key initiatives underpinning the Health Union include a new **Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe** creation of a **European Data Space and Electronic cross-border health services** (eHealth Digital Infrastructures, including electronic health records), as well as the recently established **Health Emergency Response Authority** (HERA).

The Work Programme 2023-24 continues to contribute to a **common European response to the Covid-19 pandemic**, with its **Recovery Plan**, a strong global dimension (**Covid-19 Data Platform; COVAX mechanism**) and **the EU Vaccines Strategy**, which supported the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19, as well as the **EU Strategy on COVID-19 Therapeutics** for the development and availability of effective treatments.

Cluster 1 supports the **Personal Medicine approach** aiming to increase the capacity of healthcare systems to deliver more personalised and effective healthcare.

Some topics are expected to bring relevant complementary inputs to **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan**, a political commitment to combat cancer, also supported through the **Horizon Europe Mission on Cancer**, covering the entire cancer care pathway, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, cancer data monitoring, as well as the quality of life of cancer patients and survivors.

The EU flagship **European Green Deal's** goals of making the European Union the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 are visibly integrated across Cluster 1. Where relevant, topics are addressing the need to make the delivery of health care, the design of health technologies and their manufacturing more sustainable, by reducing energy consumption, waste, pollution and the release of harmful substances, including pharmaceuticals, into the environment. Other EU strategies influencing environment and health research and innovation include: **8th Environmental Action Programme**, **Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**, **Zero Pollution Action Plan**.

In line with **Europe's Strategy for International Cooperation in R&I**, and the **new EU Global Health Strategy**, Cluster 1 aims to enhance the EU's role at the international level, as a leader in health research and innovation. This applies for multi-lateral cooperation with countries associated to Horizon Europe but also with other countries and regions in the world, especially **the partnership with Africa**. The strategy builds on existing global alliances in health in key sectors such as antimicrobial resistance (**One Health**), rare diseases (**IRDiRC**), chronic non-communicable diseases (**GACD**) or poverty-related infectious diseases (**EDCTP**), contributing therefore to the **UN's Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**.

While the **Innovative Health Initiative European Partnership** is the key Horizon Europe initiative driving a globally competitive European health industry, Cluster 1 contributes towards the **European Industrial Strategy** and the **EU's Digital Strategy**. Some of its calls focus on innovation, sustainability and competitiveness of the EU health industry as well as on strengthening the EU autonomy in critical health technologies. Cluster 1 also supports the development of the **European Health Data Space** and the **exchange of electronic health records** across EU.

More information

- **Horizon Europe website** and **Cluster 1 website**
- **2023-2025 Work Programme for Cluster 1**

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- **Regulation establishing Horizon Europe**
- **Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe**
- **First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe (2021-2024)**
- **Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe (2025-2027)**

UKRO Portal

- **UKRO Portal** (subscriber access required)

Other websites and resources

- **HaDEA Cluster 1 website**
- **EU Health Research and Innovation website**
- **EU Mission on Cancer website**
- **EU Action on Health website**
- **EU's Coronavirus response**
- **EU Vaccines Strategy**
- **EU Strategy on COVID-19 Therapeutics**
- **European Health Union website**
- **EU Environment, climate and health website**
- **EU Personalised medicine website**
- **European Health Data Space**
- **European Electronic Health Records**
- **Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe**
- **European One Health Action Plan against AMR**
- **Europe's Beating the Cancer Plan**
- **EU4Health Programme**
- **The EU's Cybersecurity Strategy**
- **UN STSDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (WHO)**