

Press Release - for immediate publication

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EPHA Welcomes MEPs' Cross-Party Call to Reinstate Operating Grants for Health Civil Society Organisations

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) welcomes [a cross-party letter by 70 Members of the European Parliament \(MEPs\)](#), who on 17 April called on the European Commission to urgently restore operating grants for health civil society organisations (CSOs) under the EU4Health Programme. The letter comes just before the European Commission is expected to publish the EU4Health 2026 Work Programme which, according to the draft presented to Member States in February, once again excludes such funding.

The MEPs' letter reinforces a growing political consensus, [already voiced by 13 Member States in March](#), that the current funding gap for health NGOs must be addressed without delay. EPHA shares the concerns outlined by the MEPs regarding the consequences of removing operating grants from the 2025 EU4Health Work Programme. This decision has already had tangible and damaging effects across the health NGO community, weakening the very actors that bring expertise, patient perspectives, and public interest advocacy into EU policymaking.

“As this cross-party initiative shows, there is broad political consensus that something is not right. Operating grants are part of the infrastructure that makes inclusive and accountable health policymaking possible. This is understood across the political spectrum, and supported by Member States. We hope that the Commission will act accordingly.” said Milka Sokolović, Director General of EPHA.

As underlined by the MEPs, there is a clear inconsistency between the EU's stated ambition to deliver on health objectives and the continued absence of structural support for health NGOs. EPHA fully supports the calls made by the 70 MEPs and urges the European Commission to:

- Reinstate operating grants for health NGOs in the EU4Health Work Programme 2026, ensuring sustainable structural support;
- Improve transparency and inclusiveness in the development of EU4Health work programmes, taking into account the perspectives of Member States, the European Parliament, and civil society stakeholders.

Background

In October 2024, 30 health civil society organisations signed Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with the European Commission, expecting the publication of calls for EU4Health operating grants for 2025. Nonetheless, in July 2025, the European Commission published the 2025 EU4Health Work Programme, seven months into the year, with no provision for and no budgetary allocation for operating grants. Four months in 2026, the EU4Health Work Programme has not yet been approved, and the funding reality for health civil society remains uncertain.

The withdrawal of operating grants in 2025 has had dramatic consequences for many organisations, leading to closures, office shutdowns, staff cuts, and reduced activities and programmes. As a result, NGOs' ability to provide independent, cross-cutting input into EU policy is critically strained at a pivotal moment for EU health policy. Operating grants fund not only overheads, but also the time and resources needed to consult communities and provide expertise on EU law and policy, and build momentum on overlooked public health issues.

ENDS

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