

PRESS RELEASE

€500 Billion Disease Burden: EU Leaders Urged to Protect Investment in Cancer and Cardiovascular Health

Joint Appeal to EU Leaders to Keep Health at the Core of EU Priorities

Brussels, 20 April 2026 - The European cardiovascular health and cancer communities have issued a direct appeal to EU Heads of State and Government to make health investment a sustained priority ahead of their European Council (EUCO) Summit on 23–24 April.

The [joint statement](#), signed by the European Alliance on Cardiovascular Health (EACH) and the European Cancer Organisation (ECO), calls for health to remain clearly identifiable and adequately resourced within both the future European Competitiveness Fund and the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034.

Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the leading causes of mortality in the European Union. Together, they are responsible for nine million diagnoses and almost three million deaths each year. Beyond the profound human toll, these conditions cost the EU close to €500 billion annually¹, driving up avoidable healthcare costs, reducing workforce productivity, and adding pressure on social systems.

The time for political action is now

EU citizens consistently rank public health among their top priorities for EU investment, as reflected in the latest Eurobarometer findings². Members of the European Parliament have also given overwhelming support for a dedicated EU health programme within the next long-term budget³. However, health is not yet treated as the political priority it must be—despite its scale, cost and impact. It is now up to EU Heads of State and Government to translate this ambition into concrete investment and policy commitments.

If Europe is to remain resilient in the face of geopolitical instability, economic pressure, and future health crises, it must significantly scale up investment in cardiovascular and cancer care. These areas represent the highest disease burden and are among the most vulnerable when health systems come under strain.

The joint statement calls on EU Heads of State and Government to:

- **Ensure** that health remains a standalone priority with sufficient, dedicated, and ringfenced funding
- **Safeguard** the visibility, predictability and scale of EU investment in health within the European Competitiveness Fund
- **Support** the full implementation of both the EU Safe Hearts Plan and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan throughout the full period of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-34
- **Recognise** health as a strategic driver of European competitiveness, particularly in life sciences, medical technologies, and digital health
- **Strengthen** the resilience and crisis preparedness of health systems in the face of geopolitical challenges and future shocks

Quotes:

Dr Isabel Rubio, President of the European Cancer Organisation said: 'The burden of cancer in Europe continues to grow, costing millions of lives and placing increasing strain on our health systems and economies. This is not sustainable. We need a standalone EU health budget to deliver real solutions. The decisions taken on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework will determine whether Europe accelerates progress or loses momentum in cancer care.'

Professor Thomas Lüscher, President of the European Society of Cardiology and representative of EACH said: 'Cardiovascular health is the bedrock on which broader population health, economic resilience and societal stability are built. When we invest in prevention and care, we reduce long-term costs, strengthen productivity and enable Europe to better withstand future shocks. Health policy must be recognised as an essential component of Europe's competitiveness strategy.'

Notes to editors

1 – The close to €500 estimation was created by summing data offered from the [European Heart Journal](#) and the [Swedish Institute for Health Economics](#).

2 – [Standard Eurobarometer 104 - Autumn 2025](#) – On the question QF3ab: ‘ And on which of the following would you like EU budget to be spent firstly? Any others?’ the answer ‘Employment, social affairs and public health was placed on top, maintaining stable support when compared to the previous edition.

3 – On 4 February 2026, the European Parliament called for the EU to renew its political commitment, funding and coordination to support full implementation of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, with 427 votes in favour, 15 against and 93 abstentions. The call also highlighted the need for a dedicated EU health programme in the next EU’s long-term budget. [More information here](#).

The full joint statement is available [here](#).

About EACH

The [European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health](#) (EACH) brings together 23 leading European and international organisations to promote cardiovascular health as a policy priority at EU level. The Alliance provides a platform to aggregate knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders active in the field of cardiovascular health, and to advise and guide policymakers. The Alliance calls for greater focus on improving cardiovascular health and reducing the burden cardiovascular disease at European level.

About the European Cancer Organisation

The [European Cancer Organisation](#) (ECO) is the largest non-profit, multi-professional federation in the European cancer community. It brings together hundreds of different professional societies and patient groups to advocate for more effective, efficient, and equitable cancer care. More information is available [here](#).

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