



Health

What is it about?

As the COVID pandemic made clear, public health risks do not stop at the border. Close cooperation and a coordinated transborder approach are vital in a highly interconnected environment such as Europe. Thus, it's in Switzerland's interest to participate in EU networks and mechanisms for crisis management to prevent transborder threats to health and thereby better protect the population's health.

In 2008, the Federal Council adopted a mandate to negotiate a health agreement with the EU. A draft for such an agreement was presented at technical level in 2018, which would allow Switzerland to become involved in the following areas:

- Mechanisms for tackling serious cross-border health threats. These include an early-warning and response system (EWRS) as well as the Health Security Committee (HSC).
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). This supports participating states on issues including the early recognition and analysis of public health threats from communicable diseases.
- The EU's multi-annual health programme. The programme helps fund health promotion projects and other initiatives.

The agreement could not be concluded due to then-unresolved institutional issues. Cooperation on health has since been conducted on a case-by-case (or *ad hoc*) basis, and was limited to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome of exploratory talks and outlook for negotiations

Switzerland and the EU want to deepen their cooperation on health via an agreement. Negotiations will therefore resume and the 2018 draft will be adapted to subsequent developments in EU law.

The agreement focuses on health security and is therefore limited to the three areas mentioned above.

However, the agreement should allow for the possibility of expanding its scope to other areas of health, if this is in the interests of both parties.