



Health

What is it about?

The Federal Council has been aiming for closer collaboration with the European Union (EU) in the field of health since 2008, to enable the participation of Switzerland in the following areas:

- mechanisms for managing serious cross-border threats to health (including the Early Warning and Response System [EWRS] and the Health Security Committee [HSC]);
- the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which assists participating states in areas such as early detection and analysis of health threats related to communicable diseases;
- the EU's multiannual health programme (which includes the co-financing of health promotion projects).

Up to now, this agreement could not be concluded due to unresolved institutional issues. As a result, the cooperation between Switzerland and the EU has been conducted on a case-by-case basis, and has been limited exclusively to crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the package approach, Switzerland and the EU have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their collaboration in the field of health.

Negotiation results

In accordance with the mandate from the Federal Council, Switzerland has negotiated an agreement that guarantees full access to the EU's health security mechanisms and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). This agreement increases the number of instruments available to Switzerland to better protect its population by strengthening its early warning and response capabilities in the field of epidemiological surveillance.

The agreement focuses on health security, but it provides for the possibility of future extension to other areas of health, if this is in the interests of both parties. In accordance with the Federal Council's mandate, the agreement includes the institutional elements by analogy.

Switzerland's participation in the EU's multiannual health programme (currently EU4Health) is ensured by a protocol to the Programme Agreement. Switzerland will only participate in the part of the health programme that is linked to the scope of the health agreement, namely the area of "crisis preparedness".

The negotiation objectives have been achieved.

Importance for Switzerland

Health risks do not respect borders. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that close cooperation and a coordinated, cross-border approach in Europe are essential. It is therefore in Switzerland's interest to participate in the EU crisis management networks and mechanisms, as well as in the prevention of cross-border health threats, to better protect the health of Switzerland's population.