

# Experience Paper | Twinning edition N° 5



## Executive Summary

This Experience Paper reports about the exchanges and results of the discussion among the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the EU4Health Programme and the participants in the fifth Twinning Programme hosted by the Ministry of Health of Portugal on January 25, 2024 in Lisbon.

By starting from the presentation of the hosting organization and the peculiarities of the Portuguese public health policies and system, the participants have then shared national experiences and perspectives, especially **focusing on 4 topics of interest:**

- 1. Synergies between EU4Health and Horizon Europe (Health Cluster and Mission on Cancer)**
- 2. Competent Authorities nomination in Joint Actions**
- 3. Stakeholders' Mapping & Engagement: from WP2023 to WP2024**
- 4. Unit Costs**

This edition of the Twinning Programme involved **44 participants** (representing 20 countries), **out of which 17 National Focal Points of the EU4Health Programme.**

Newly nominated NFPs (eg. From France, Germany, Austria) have been introduced to the participants. Upcoming new nominations are expected representing Montenegro, just associated to EU4Health. A new NFP will be nominated and engaged soon in the activity of NFP4Health project

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## Introduction

**Date:** 25 January 2024

**Place:** Lisbon (Portugal)

**Venue:** Av. João Crisóstomo n° 9 1049-062, Lisbon

**Host:** General Secretariat of the Ministry of Health

**Co-organizer:** [APRE](#) (Contact Persons: [debonis@apre.it](mailto:debonis@apre.it); [mourenza@apre.it](mailto:mourenza@apre.it); [buonocore@apre.it](mailto:buonocore@apre.it))

## Concept

The Joint Action on Increasing the Capacity of National Focal Points (NFP) (NFP4Health) is a 40-months action by the European Commission with the main objective of creating and maintaining an innovative ecosystem to facilitate and support European countries in achieving health objectives priorities established for the period 2021-2027. By developing and strengthening the National Focal Points (NFPs) capacities of European Countries, the Joint Action aims to provide quality access to the new EU4HEALTH Programme and to assure the complementarity with other regional, national and EU policies, funds and programmes. This action will allow maximizing efforts to leverage all available health funding, to guarantee the accessibility and sustainability of healthcare systems. NFP4Health project will contribute to create an innovative, sustainable and coherent network of NFPs that will increase the capacity of the Member States to design and create sustainable implementation actions that will boost the achievement of health objectives for the period 2021-2027.

As part NFP4Health, **Task 6.3 “NFPs Twinning Programme”** will be organised to share in a structured and output-oriented way approaches, good practices and tools between/among NFPs.

**Eight editions** of the Twinning programme are foreseen for NFPs, focusing on countries with low participation rates or newly nominated NFPs, in order **to provide opportunities for exchange of experiences and good practices, and to improve successful national NFP services**. Sharing experiences, skills and ideas enables NFPs and NFP networks to develop and scale-up approaches, services and tools targeting stakeholders. This exchange is facilitated and managed by APRE – Affiliated Entity of the Italian Ministry of Health - by virtual interaction (Teams) and site visits, back to back with NFP4Health Training Programmes.

## Thematic focus for this 5° edition:

Following a consultation among NFPs, managed by APRE, and looking at the works of the previous editions, 4 topics have been identified for further discussion in the occasion of the 5° edition of the Twinning Programme in Lisbon:

- 1. Synergies between EU4Health and Horizon Europe (Health Cluster and Mission on Cancer)**
- 2. Competent Authorities nomination in Joint Actions**
- 3. Stakeholders’ Mapping & Engagement: from WP2023 to WP2024**
- 4. Unit Costs**

## Participants

This edition of the Twinning Programme involved **44 participants**, out of which **17 National Focal Points of the EU4Health Programme, representing 20 different countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Netherland, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine.**

Name	Surname	Organization	NFP	Member State
Iwanek	Artur	PL Ministry of Health	NFP	Poland
Vincent	Buhagiar	Ministry for Health	NFP	Malta
Miguel	Caetano	PT NFP - GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH	-	Portugal
Jost	de Bruin	RVO	NFP	Netherlands
Emőke Soós	Dr. Soós	Ministry of Interior, Health Policy Department	-	Hungary
Matouš	Duraj	Ministry of Helath of the Czech Republic	NFP	Czech Republic
Norma Regina Faroun	Faroun	Ministry of Interior, Health Policy Department	-	Hungary
Ines	Ferreira	PT NFP - GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH	NFP	Portugal
Janicke	Fischer	The Norwegian Directorate of Health	NFP	Norway
Sanita	Freivalde	Ministry of Health	NFP	Latvia
Ana	García	Instituto de Salud Carlos III ((ISCIII)	-	Spain
Anne-Sophie	Gernez	French Ministry of Health	-	France
Olga	Gvozdetska	Pablic Health Center of the MoH	NFP	Ukraine
Walter	Hintz	Ministry of Health	-	Spain
Tomáš	Hrůza	Ministry of Health	-	Czech Republic
Melani	Janjic	Austrian National Public Health Institute (GÖG)	NFP	Austria
Rafn Magnus	Jonsson	Directorate of Health	NFP	Iceland
Sólveig	Karlsdóttir	Directorate of Health	NFP	Iceland
Ieva	Kušķe	Ministry of health	NFP	Latvia
Petra	Maloča	Croatian Instite of Public Health		Croatia
Ivanka	Markovic	Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade	-	Republic of Serbia
Cristina	Medina Prado	Fundación Progreso y Salud (FPS)	-	Spain
Irene	Mikulcik	Austrian Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, GÖG)	-	Austria
Natalia	Mozeova	Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic	NFP	Slovakia
Tamara	Muñoz	FPS-WP3		Spain
Virginia	Nieto Guerrero	Fundación Andaluza Progreso y Salud	-	Spain
Sofia	Nunes	PT NFP - GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH	NFP	Portugal
Ljubica	Pakovic	Ministry of Health	NFP	Republic of Serbia
Pirjo	Pietilä-Kainulainen	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	NFP	Finland
MAJA	ŠALAMUN SENICA	MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF SLOVENIA	NFP	SLOVENIA

MARINA SILVIA	SCAMARDO	MINISTRY OH HEATLH	-	ITALY
Raymond	Schembri	Ministry for Health	-	Malta
Matthias	Schott	PD	-	Germany
Hanna	Shchetynina	PHC Ukraine		Ukraine
Kinga	Sieńko-Wójtowicz	Ministry of Health	-	Poland
Marie	Sonnenstuhl	Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (BMSGPK)	-	Austria
Andreas	Stierschneider	Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Affairs and Health	-	Austria
Pär	Vikström	Public Health Agency of Sweden	NFP	Sweden
Rácz Zoltán	Zoltán	Ministry of Interior	-	Hungary

## Agenda:

<b>9.30</b>	<b>Welcome Coffee</b>
10.00	<b>Welcome and opening of the Twinning session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ana Pedroso – Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Portuguese Ministry of Health</li> </ul>
10.10	<b>Presentation of the Portuguese NFP Team: mission, strategies and plans for 2024</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inês Tavares Ferreira, EU4Health NFP, Ministry of Health of Portugal</li> <li>Miguel José Caetano, EU4Health NFP, Ministry of Health of Portugal</li> </ul>
10.20	<b>Importance of European Funding in the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Healthy Eating at National and European Levels</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maria João Gregório, Directorate-General of Health, Ministry of Health of Portugal</li> </ul>
<b>10.30</b>	<b>TOUR DE TABLE</b>
10.30	<b>Tour de table among Twinning participants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All participants</li> </ul>
10.55	<b>Laying the ground for exchange and sharing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathilde De Bonis, APRE - Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea</li> </ul>
<b>11.00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>11.10</b>	<b>SHARING REAL EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICES</b>
11.10	<b>Topic 1: Synergies between EU4Health &amp; Horizon Europe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irene Mikulcik, GÖG- Austrian National Public Health Institute, Austria</li> <li>Isabel Carvalho-Oliveira, AICIB - Agência de Investigação Clínica e Inovação Biomédica, Portugal</li> </ul> <b>Topic 2: Competent Authorities nomination in Joint Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vincent Buhagiar, Ministry of Health (DIP), Malta</li> </ul> <b>Topic 3: Stakeholders' Mapping &amp; Engagement: from WP2023 to WP2024</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jost de Bruin, Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), Netherlands</li> </ul> <b>Topic 4: Open Discussion on Unit Costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artur Iwanek, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Health (MoH – PL), Poland</li> </ul>

11.30	OPEN DISCUSSION
12.00	CONCLUSION
12.30	Lunch

## Welcome and introduction by the Ministry of Health of Portugal

*Ana Pedrosa – Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Portuguese Ministry of Health*

*Inês Tavares Ferreira, EU4Health NFP, Ministry of Health of Portugal*

*Miguel José Caetano, EU4Health NFP, Ministry of Health of Portugal Matous Duraj – Head of Financial Mechanism Unit, European Funds and Investment Development Department*

*Maria João Gregório, Directorate-General of Health, Ministry of Health of Portugal*

After the Secretary-General's welcome, the Portuguese NFPs Team has been presented by Inês Tavares Ferreira.

Despite their small team, NFPs in Portugal work hard to harness the most the great opportunities coming from EU funds and especially EU4Health, a programme that actually integrates the often low public spending to support the healthcare system in Portugal.

The team is mainly engaged in the Communication & Dissemination of the opportunities of the EU4Health Programme, especially organizing 2 Info Days per year and directly supporting potential applicants with one-to-one meeting to accompany them in the preparation of their proposals.

A strong commitment on social media to inform about the Programme and dissemination in relevant reviews and other channels are also part of the activities of the Portuguese team of NFPs, in a scenario where Portugal – to date - is represented in 26 Joint Actions and coordinates 5 out of 29 Action Grants, while 21 Health Institutes are associated with the Portuguese Ministry of Health in the Programme.

Cancer is the topic that attract the majority of successful applicants in EU4Health, with the highest participation from the Lisbon region.

On this regards, looking at the near future, the team is fully committed to broaden the knowledge on the programme across the country, by training and keeping disseminating, especially project results, in order to use participants' experience and testimonies to make new potential applicants more confident with the Programme.

A public consultation to further engage participants and potential applicants to the Programme is also planned by the Portuguese NFPs Team, in order to gather evidence and inputs from the national stakeholders to inspire policies and investments at EU level.

Maria João Gregório, Directorate-General of Health at the Ministry of Health of Portugal, has then intervened remotely to present the *Importance of European Funding in the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Healthy Eating at National and European Levels*.

Prof. Gregório has shared its experience with EU4Health and her view, from the public health perspective, on the opportunities offered by the EU Programme to the national policies supporting the healthcare system.

Considering that only 3 % of public spending is allocated to Health in Portugal – she stated - the support of EU Programmes in the field is crucial, improving the research capacity of the national system, as well as the implementation of healthcare actions and policies.

Indeed, policy making is complex, and policy makers need more information to succeed, often going beyond scientific evidence. On this regard, the evidence and info coming from EU funded projects has a great relevance at national level and may help the national system to better address regional and global goals.

Several examples have been given by Prof. Gregório on EU projects supporting and complementing national policies, demonstrating also how such participation strengthen national connection with international organizations and EU institutions.

**The added value of cross boarder nature of such projects has been shown to overcome limits of national approaches in several fields**, like digital marketing of unhealthy products.

Moreover, EU4Health provides resources that – through the new JAs lead by national authorities – provide sustainability to the actions and policies of the Ministry, creating complementary actions across the different projects in which they are participating, showing the great potential of synergies among projects.

An example of this has been given on scaling up food monitoring in Europe through different Joint Actions, such as: JANPA Joint Action (2015-2017), Best-ReMaP Joint Action (2020-2023), EC JRC (2023).

## Q&A

- [Question to Ines] How do you envisage the national participation in the Joint Actions?
- [Answer] As a Ministry, we would like to engage with more affiliated entities.

## Materials

-  [Portuguese NFP Team 2024\\_miguel\\_ines.pdf](#)
-  [Gregorio\\_The importance of European Funding on the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles - Maria João Gregório.pdf](#)

## Sharing Real Experiences and Practices

### Topic 1: Synergies between EU4Health & Horizon Europe

Irene Mikulcik, GÖG- Austrian National Public Health Institute, Austria

Isabel Carvalho-Oliveira, AICIB - Agência de Investigação Clínica e Inovação Biomédica, Portugal

Irene Mikulcik, from GÖG- Austrian National Public Health Institute, provided a concrete example of fruitful joint collaboration between NFP4Health and HNN3.0, the European Network of the National Contact Points (NCPs) of the Health Cluster of Horizon Europe: *Health funding in EU4Health and Horizon Europe. A factsheet by HNN 3.0 and NFP4Health.*

As a tool for applicants, this factsheet has been presented, providing information on the opportunities from the Health Cluster and the Mission on Cancer in comparison with those of the EU4Health Programme, highlighting the key aspects and main differences and similarities, as well as spaces for potential synergies to the applicants of the 2 programmes.

The factsheet is now public available at <https://www.healthncp.net/pdf/factsheet-health-funding-eu4health-and-horizon-europe>

The Austrian NFP has then presented their web (sub)page dedicated to Synergies among EU Programmes, populated with guiding information on the matter, also shared or jointly produced with the NFP/NCP of other Programmes.

Moreover, she also showed how they are contributing to the *Synergy mission* of the EC by organizing thematic events showcasing projects funded from different programmes, such as that on Cancer held on Dec. 2023 with projects from EU4Health, Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme: [Deep Dive: Project showcase - Actions on cancer across EU funds and programmes](#)

Isabel Carvalho-Oliveira, from AICIB - Agência de Investigação Clínica e Inovação Biomédica (Portugal) has contributed to the discussion on the topic of Synergy as representative of the HNN3.0 Network of the National Contact Points (NCPs) of the Health Cluster of Horizon Europe.

Moreover, she has presented how NCPs and NFPs in Portugal are fruitfully collaborating at national level since 2020, joining forces and taking advantage of the R&I community of stakeholders built by the “Health” NCPs and further engaged in the participation in EU4Health.

Several webinars have been jointly organized at national level by NCPs/NFPs presenting the 2 programmes embracing a “synergy” perspective, such as:

- 15 Oct. 2023: engaging also Portuguese coordinators from H2020 projects, with more than 600 participants and the presence of the European Commission present.
- 21 Oct. 2023: on Cancer, with more than 400 participants, including projects from EU4Health, Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme

Other webinars and link are provided in the materials below.

A Newsletter from the “Health” NCPs of Horizon Europe periodically shares information about EU4Health. Moreover, any time Portuguese NCP address clients they always provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for the Health sector that include, thus, EU4Health, redirecting those clients to NFPs if relevant, contributing – in this way - to the consolidation of NFPs own community of stakeholders.

Moreover, it is often the case that “Health” NCPs of Horizon Europe come first to specific information at EU level that are relevant for NFPs of EU4Health. So, it is crucial to promptly share with the colleague NFPs at national level.

This can be a reciprocal commitment: ***Take the best from NCP/NFP environment ...and then exchange!***

## Q&A

- *[Question to All] Considering the establishment of the Mission on Cancer Strategic Committee, working to create synergies in the implementation of the respective WPs, it seems that there is a firm intention of the EC to facilitate synergies calling for a real integration of the works of NFPs/NCPs. On the wake of these initiative, what about advocating at EU level to suggest HaDEA to find a way to provide the NFPs with the access to the results of participation in the Programme, to get them aligned with the NCPs environment and for the ultimate purpose of effectively supporting applicants in the participation in the Programme?*
- *[Answer from Sandi] As a Coordinator of the NFP4Health, the Italian Ministry of Health will explore the feasibility of such option.*

## Materials

-  [Irene\\_SYNERGIES\\_Austria\\_Pitch\\_on\\_Synergies.pdf](#)
-  [ISABEL\\_Synergies\\_NCPs&NFPs\\_PT25\\_01\\_2024.pdf](#)



## Topic 2: Competent Authorities nomination in Joint Actions

Vincent Buhagiar, Ministry of Health (DIP), Malta

**A Joint Action (JA)** is a direct grant consisting in collaborative action among Member States and associated countries participating in the EU4Health Programme, inter alia, to develop, share, refine and test tools, methods and approaches to specific health issues, and engage in capacity building in key areas of interest.

In line with Article 13(5) of the EU4Health Programme Regulation and the relevant annual work programme, Joint Actions will be co-financed by:

- competent authorities responsible for health in the Member States or in third countries associated to the Programme; or
- public sector bodies or non-governmental bodies that are mandated by those competent authorities, regardless of whether those bodies act individually or as a network.

Therefore, the **competent authority** manages and carries out the Joint Action together with the coordinator (lead competent authority for the joint action) contributing with their own funding and ensuring that the objectives of the Joint Action are met. The nominated competent authority may involve in the grant under its responsibility other participants, such as affiliated entities, subcontractors. Their names shall be indicated by the competent authorities when submitting the proposal, together with the activities they will perform.

**Affiliated entities** are entities with a legal link to the beneficiaries which implement parts of the action and are allowed to charge costs directly to the grant. ‘Legal link to the beneficiaries’ means a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This covers:

- permanent legal structures (e.g., the relationship between an association and its members)
- contractual cooperation not limited to the action (e.g., a collaboration agreement for research in a particular field)
- capital link. i.e., – direct or indirect control of the beneficiary.

**The submission of the competent authority nominations** per Joint Action under the EU4Health Programme 2023 shall be done through the EU Survey website following this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EU4HEALTH\\_JA2023](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EU4HEALTH_JA2023)

The editable .pdf template of the nomination form should be downloaded, completed, printed and signed by the nominating authority, in general by the Ministry of Health or Health Board.

Then, it should be submitted completing a short online registration form consistently with the completed .pdf nomination form. The scanned signed version of the latter should be uploaded and submitted.

The NFP from Malta provided an information package on Joint Actions, including the documentation needed to nominate Competent Authorities (CAs), and commented with the participants.

Finland, Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Poland and other has experience already in nominating CA in JAs. Participants shared similarities in their participation in JA.

### Q&A

- *[Question to All] Often it is difficult to define if an institution is eligible to be nominated CA. We in Austria, are often in the position to ask priorly to the EC if they would approve our designation*

- [Answer from Jost de Bruin – Netherland] This happens frequently, especially when private organizations are identified as potential CA/Affiliated.
- [Comment from Janicke Fischer - Norway] – about the ‘Legal link to the beneficiaries’ to be proved for Affiliated Entities to the beneficiary, sometime it is difficult to undertake MoU or other collaboration agreements in advance with organizations potentially eligible.

### Topic 3: Stakeholders’ Mapping & Engagement: from WP2023 to WP2024

Jost de Bruin, Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), Netherlands

The NFP from Netherlands shared with the participants how they identify and engage potential stakeholders. First of all, they organized their activities based on the 2 years programme cycle of EU4Health and prioritize topics from Action Grants to inform applicants through their channels.

Need for Partner Search is often the occasion to get in touch with new stakeholders.

NFPs usually get in touch with around 3 coordinator per topic that address them to be supported in the partner search. NFPs facilitate often matchmaking, besides the availability of formal channels, like the Portal.

### Topic 4: Open Discussion on Unit Costs

Artur Iwanek, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Health (MoH – PL), Poland

The NFP from Poland has shared some frequent questions received at national level on this topic and the participants were engaged in the discussion as a joint NFP typical exercise to support applicants.

Here follow the Questions and Answers commented from the participants and elaborated also thanks to the Legal and Financial team at Promis.

- [Background] About EU4H-2022-JA-IBA, Project: 101124540 — IncreaseNET in context of unit costs. In the proposal, travels are to be accounted for according to the unit costs on the basis of the following document: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/additional-information-on-unit-costs-and-contributions\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/additional-information-on-unit-costs-and-contributions_en.pdf)
- [Comment] This document refers to Commission Decision C(2021)35 which has been updated last year by Commission Decision C(2023)4928, see [https://apre-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/debonis\\_apre\\_it/EV--9kxlgNxlUbaai8Vy5yYBgSPXYDD7v7R4mwDvBAQwUg?e=fWcUrd](https://apre-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/debonis_apre_it/EV--9kxlgNxlUbaai8Vy5yYBgSPXYDD7v7R4mwDvBAQwUg?e=fWcUrd)
- [QUESTION 1] *In the aforementioned project, two people [from PL] are going to Slovenia for 3 days/ 2 nights and specific amounts are given in the document. The coordinator asks for the accurate figures for the travel for each person to be settled in the report. **Does this mean that a traveling person is entitled to these specific amounts and can purchase airline ticket/ hotel on their own without having to issue and post invoices to the university?***
- [ANSWER 1] *It means that two people from PL are entitled to travel and claim reimbursement to the EC on the basis of unit costs (ref. Commission Decision in attachment and [https://ec.europa.eu/info/calculate-unit-costs-eligible-travel-costs\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/calculate-unit-costs-eligible-travel-costs_en) regardless of the actual costs incurred.*
- [QUESTION 2] *We have also doubts about subsistence costs. In project, it amounts to 84 euro per day for one person. However, our national regulations provide subsistence allowance to Slovenia of 45 euro plus flat fee for travel costs from and to airport as well as flat fee for a local transport plus of course city tax if this is the case. **Should we pay a higher subsistence allowance to the person in line with the costs planned in the project?***
- [ANSWER 2] *The subsistence costs to be reported to the EC do not relate to what is or is not paid to the employee under the national/company employment contract, but must be calculated on the basis of unit costs, e.g. for Slovenia 84,00 € per day.*

3. [QUESTION 3] According to the presentation available below: [https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/Unit%20Costs%20PPT%20Decision%20%28C%282021%2935%29%20HADEA\\_version%202023.1.13.pdf](https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/Unit%20Costs%20PPT%20Decision%20%28C%282021%2935%29%20HADEA_version%202023.1.13.pdf) The beneficiaries do not need to keep specific records on the actual costs incurred. **Please confirm and advise me on how to correctly account for travels with the EU4health projects?**
4. [ANSWER 3] Correct, you just need to report the costs calculated on the basis of unit costs without any supporting documentation. However, for your records, you should keep attendance registers of the event, presentations, etc. to prove that those people attended the meeting.

## Materials

-  [Iwanek\\_UNIT COSTS\\_25.01.2024 NFPs Twinning Programme\\_Unit Costs\\_PL contribution.pdf](#)