

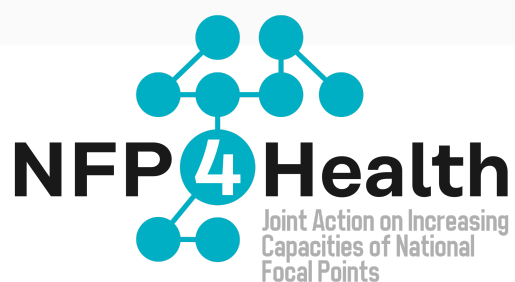


# NFP4Health

FINAL EVENT

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## Introduction

Giovanni Nicoletti (IT MoH) introduced the event, presenting the speakers. Marina Zanchi (HaDEA) welcomed the participants and pointed out the importance of the event, while offering a perspective on the knowledge acquired, the synergies created also to avoid overlapping and the role of the national focal points that will continue. M Telea (HaDEA) provided an overview and an analysis of the implementation of EU4Health grants over time, serving as the framing for the rest of the sessions.

## Session 1 – JA NFP4Health: Main output and impact results

### WP3 Evaluation

A snapshot of assessed elements was provided, focusing on three dimensions: the creation of a network among NFPs, the establishment of links between NFPs and other stakeholders, and the effectiveness of the dissemination of information on the new EU4Health programme.

It was assessed that the joint action has contributed to the establishment of a minimum common standard defining the role of the NFP. Furthermore, it has supported the development of structured synergies among NFPs and promoted a better use of the new areas and instruments of the programme, ultimately contributing to its successful implementation. The joint action also supported the effort to improve the dissemination of information to potential beneficiaries of the programme.

Summarising the fulfilment of the expected results, four of them have been successfully accomplished, one has been partially achieved, and for another it is difficult to reach a definitive judgement, although it clearly benefits from the positive contributions of the other components. The detailed findings have been circulated among the Consortium.

The analysis concluded by outlining a set of recommendations—conceived as strategies to address deviations and challenges observed during the life of the joint action—which aim to increase the impact of future initiatives. These include: regular updates of the NFP profile and the reinforcement of the monitoring system; statistical evaluation of participation rates in the EU4Health programme; increased number of events at national level to support network communication; stronger cooperation and information exchange between NFPs and stakeholders; inclusion of NFP-related strategies in the sustainability plan; and a thorough revision of the platform's content and functionality.

The recommendations were complemented by a list of lessons learned from the assessment process, which will be applied in the next joint action. Among the most relevant: the need to define realistic and well-calibrated tasks, criteria, and KPIs, avoiding overambitious goals or the assumption that 100% of participating countries will provide reports; taking into account the technical limitations that some countries might face when reporting data, and of verifying their ability to monitor or track specific information; acknowledging that the number of responses received from stakeholder surveys is typically limited and, therefore, results should be used as supporting evidence with caution.

### WP2 - Communication and Dissemination

With regards to the key tools/methodologies used in WP activities, WP2 highlighted the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring system, supported by robust governance mechanisms. These include national contact points and scientific boards that ensure alignment and effective implementation. The WP also placed significant emphasis on engagement with

stakeholders, especially young people, through structured youth involvement strategies. It also focused on the use of qualitative methods, particularly desk research and interviews. These tools were applied to both internal processes (such as mapping national youth-related initiatives) and the co-creation of project deliverables. A participatory approach guided the methodology.

With regards to how the tools used supported other WPs' activities, it was explained that the tools developed in WP2, especially the stakeholder mapping and coordination templates, were useful for other WPs to better plan and align their work. These tools created a shared reference point and supported consistency across the project.

With regards to what the main targets of C&D activities were in the different phases of the project, and concerning suggestions for improving targeted communication for future activities, it was reported that the main focus of communication and dissemination activities was to clearly define the scope and objectives of monitoring, followed by setting the appropriate communication phases to achieve those goals. One of the primary challenges encountered was staff turnover, which necessitated repeated training of new personnel and proved time-consuming. Another key issue was the timely acquisition of information from partners in other countries, often hindered by delays. For future communication strategies, the use of shared channels and designated communication teams was recommended, along with the creation of specific and well-structured questions to ensure clarity and efficiency in data collection and exchange.

#### **WP4 - Sustainability of action and integration in national policies**

With regards to the key tools/methodologies used in WP activities, a two-fold methodology was described: first, the development of a repository of promising practices, and second, the implementation of a training programme. These activities were grounded in structured frameworks and used digital platforms to collect and disseminate knowledge. Collaboration with WP2 ensured that the monitoring indicators were fully integrated into the evaluation tools of the training.

With regards to the role of the NFP profile, the deliverable helped define the structure and focus of the capacity-building activities. It gave clarity on the competencies needed and allowed WP6 to tailor the training offer accordingly.

Concerning take-home messages of the Sustainability Plan, it was noted that the Sustainability efforts varied across Joint Actions, but political and financial sustainability remained common priorities. However, long-term funding and integration of outcomes into national policies continue to present challenges. A dedicated questionnaire sent to all Joint Action coordinators under EU4Health helped gather inputs, although the level of completion varied. The plan concluded with key recommendations: establishing a standardized EU-wide sustainability framework from the outset; conducting follow-up studies post-project to assess the evolution of outcomes; organizing an annual EU Joint Action Sustainability Summit to share best practices; encouraging environmental impact assessments even for projects not environment-focused; creating a central digital repository for sustainability-related outputs; and implementing peer-to-peer mentoring between experienced and newer Joint Actions. These recommendations aim to foster collaboration and strategic alignment among initiatives.

## **WP5 - Support synergies with other health-related EU funds/programmes**

With regards to the key tools/methodologies used in WP activities, WP5 underlined the importance of adopting a behavioural science perspective. Through desk reviews and a deep understanding of current youth behaviours, the WP aimed to identify communication models that can effectively reach and engage audiences. Feedback was systematically collected and incorporated, making the strategy responsive and dynamic.

In the context of how synergies concretely contributed to activities, it was noted that WP5 helped WP4 by identifying and mapping existing EU initiatives, which allowed for better integration of external resources. This avoided overlaps and strengthened the stakeholder engagement work in WP4.

With regards to the outcome of the work on mapping synergies with other programmes, it was stated that the mapping exercise led to approximately twenty actionable recommendations, grouped into strategic, operational, and capacity-building levels. It became clear that the effectiveness of National Focal Points (NFPs) hinges on ensuring adequate resources, staffing, and institutional positioning. While every country must define its own approach, maintaining continuity and building institutional knowledge emerged as critical needs. A recurring theme was the importance of timely, reliable information sharing—NFPs must be equipped to proactively inform stakeholders, avoiding reactive communication based on second-hand news. Furthermore, synergies among NFPs across countries have proven mutually beneficial, particularly when tackling similar challenges. Recommendations emphasised joint thematic events, cross-sector collaboration, and shared administrative platforms to streamline communication with stakeholders. Ultimately, a coordinated and informed approach strengthens the overall ability of NFPs to support stakeholders and amplify the impact of EU programmes.

## **WP6 - Capacity building for National Focal Points**

With regards to the key tools/methodologies used in WP activities, WP6 reported the development of the digital platform as a core tool. This platform was built as a hub to collect resources, facilitate networking, and support the scaling up of successful practices. The methodology involved a user-centred design process, supported by technical partners and enriched by feedback from end users.

When asked about the major strengths, weaknesses and challenges of NFPs that emerged in the capacity-building activities, what was pointed out was strong motivation and engagement among NFPs, but also variability in experience, resources and availability. Some struggled with time constraints or limited support at national level, highlighting the need for ongoing training and targeted support at the network level.

A dedicated analysis was provided on the main achievements of the learning-by-doing training sessions on co-programming and co-funding, addressing how they could be improved for future implementation. The learning-by-doing labs organised by WP6 focused on co-programming and co-funding and were met with unexpectedly high levels of participation, demonstrating a strong interest from stakeholders. These sessions adopted a practical approach, simulating real project proposals to familiarise participants with EU funding terminology and procedures, while reinforcing their ability to align national priorities with European instruments. The outcomes included increased confidence among participants in engaging with co-funded initiatives, as well as stronger informal networks and collaboration

among National Focal Points and stakeholders. WP6 noted the significant value of these training sessions for capacity building and mutual learning. For future implementation, it was suggested to further tailor the sessions to national contexts and consider smaller, more interactive formats to maximise engagement and knowledge retention.

## Q&A and Discussion Summary

The discussion session opened with remarks from the representatives of DG SANTE and HERA, who expressed their congratulations on the achievements of the Joint Action and emphasised its strategic importance. They reiterated their commitment to continued engagement in future Joint Actions and underlined the value of organising and participating in national events to enhance outreach and visibility. Concerns about information flows were addressed, and DG SANTE invited NFPs to engage in bilateral discussions for deeper clarification. The issue of training and capacity-building was also raised, specifically regarding the scope and audience of the initiatives. Clarifications were offered on the nature of the twinning programmes and their distinction from other forms of technical assistance. A broader question was raised about whether the increased participation observed in the new EU4Health programme could be attributed, in part, to the work of national focal points—a point viewed as crucial for evaluating the impact of the Joint Action. HERA added that the organisation had previously benefited from the Joint Action mainly for the dissemination of calls, but looked forward to more direct engagement in the next phase. It was emphasised that expertise and human capital remain at the heart of success and how important it is that knowledge and know-how from one national focal point can be effectively transferred to others, across and within Member States.

Panellists shared additional insight about how knowledge exchange among national focal points currently occurs through a variety of informal and formal mechanisms, and stressed the value of trusted informal channels, particularly for questions that require nuanced understanding or pre-discussion before escalation to HaDEA. Specific mention was also made of previous twinning editions—eight in total—which were requested by individual countries, often to address low participation or to onboard newly nominated focal points. The format enabled personalised knowledge transfer and good practice sharing based on the specific needs of each country. Panellists acknowledged the need for both formal databases and protected knowledge-sharing environments to balance GDPR considerations with practical information exchange. The importance of the network itself and of structural resources was particularly highlighted (Spain was mentioned as a positive example), especially in the face of constant personnel insecurity and the need for continuity.

Lastly, it was noted that the new Joint Action proposal (NFP4Health2) attempts to incorporate lessons learned and stakeholder feedback received to date, particularly regarding training, dissemination, and mutual learning among focal points.

## Closing Remarks

**Absorption Capacity:** The significantly expanded budget of the EU4Health Programme presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While many new stakeholders have been engaged, absorption capacity remains uneven across Member States. Addressing this disparity is critical to maintaining funding levels and ensuring equitable impact.

**Transmission Role of NFPs:** NFPs are essential conduits for knowledge, access, and capacity-building. They support the development of quality proposals, connect smaller and



less experienced institutions to the program, and help align national efforts with broader EU strategic goals. Synergies with other EU funding instruments are key to maximizing impact.

**Mutual Learning and Collaboration:** Peer learning is a central success factor. M. Wismar suggested efforts that promote collective learning and sustainability through experience exchange, underscoring the value of reflection and historical insight in program evolution.

**Capacity and Structures:** Effective participation depends not only on individual expertise but also on robust institutional structures and governance mechanisms. Continuity, networks, and institutional memory were emphasized as foundational for maintaining progress despite personnel or organizational changes.

**Sustainability and Resilience:** Ensuring long-term sustainability remains a pressing challenge, especially under conditions of fiscal constraint. Nevertheless, there must be optimism about the resilience and growing maturity of the NFP network, commending its strategic evolution and capacity for self-reflection.

M. Wismar concluded with strong recognition of the indispensable role played by National Focal Points in operationalizing the EU4Health Programme. While acknowledging that public health budgets are limited in size, he emphasized that the strategic structure and partnerships fostered by the program have yielded significant and lasting value. The call to continue investing in and empowering NFPs is clear: they are central to building resilient, effective, and democratic health systems across Europe.

## **Session 2 - Looking to the future: NFP4Health 2**

A. Pérez (DG SANTE) acknowledged the ongoing transition into the new joint action and emphasised its core mandate: promoting the programme, disseminating results, and supporting stakeholder access to funding. He reiterated how essential these pillars remain despite the evolving structure. He also noted a promising convergence between the National Contact Points (NCPs) and the Joint Action network, suggesting that overlapping roles could improve efficiency provided the appointed individuals are well-informed and capable. Stressing the value of proximity to stakeholders, he argued that National Focal Points (NFPs) should handle most queries to avoid overburdening HaDEA or the Commission with solvable local issues. He stressed the importance of using recommendations from the previous joint action to improve the current one and noted dissemination must be embedded within funded projects rather than treated as a separate task. After his speech, representatives of the Work Packages were invited to introduce themselves and give short overviews of their respective areas.

### **WP2: Communication and Dissemination**

The strength of WP2's leadership structure was emphasized, while highlighting the unique advantage of combining an external communication perspective with insider NFP expertise. The goal of WP2 is to effectively communicate the activities and outputs of the joint action to both stakeholders and the wider public, particularly those unfamiliar with NFPs but potentially interested in EU4Health opportunities. The focus will be on making the joint action more visible and accessible to its beneficiaries.



It was emphasized that communication must pivot from being inward-facing to engaging the broader public and the potential stakeholders of EU4Health programs. The upcoming WP2 would focus on increasing visibility of outputs, encouraging interaction, and explaining the role of NFPs to those who have never heard of them.

While newsletters were once the go-to for institutional communication, a significant drop-off in relevance was noted. Instead, the aim is to lean more heavily on social media channels like LinkedIn where engagement was already organically strong and professional in nature. The team will listen and adapt based on feedback from the network, reinforcing the principle that communication won't be handed down—it will be co-created.

### **WP4: Sustainability**

Work Package 4's role will be to translate the goals of permanence and long-term value into a strategic work stream that embeds the EU4Health program within national public health systems. The work package's guiding ambition is that National Focal Points are viewed as strategic actors. The goal is to make EU4Health a lasting part of the national public health system by empowering and supporting these NFPs.

The four main objectives of WP4 were outlined:

1. Support sustainable implementation at national and EU levels.
2. Enhance the strategic planning capacity of NFPs.
3. Define sustainability strategies that integrate with national health frameworks.
4. Develop tools for effective advocacy.

It was added that an initial task would involve a gap analysis to identify barriers to NFP effectiveness and design structural solutions. This would include best practices, stakeholder mapping, and linking with WP6 to deliver joint training.

### **WP6: The Knowledge Hub**

An overview was presented of key elements of the National Focal Point Knowledge Hub, which will be built on the basis of the existing NFP platform, which has been functioning mostly as a static repository of documents.

By upgrading the existing infrastructure, it will be possible to build something more ambitious, a shared workspace and communication channel to improve interaction, responsiveness, and access to resources among NFPs.

Several core features were highlighted:

- Secure internal communication to replace platforms like WhatsApp (which are blocked by certain institutions).
- Have in-house forms and collaborative tools to eliminate reliance on third-party services like Google or Microsoft.
- Have thematic clusters where documents, deliverables, discussions, and training can be grouped by topic or work package.
- Look for a potential integration of AI search tools for easier navigation of shared resources.

## **WP7: Tailored support to beneficiary needs at the National level**

The work package 7 focuses on providing tailored support to each country involved in the joint action, and it is uniquely positioned at the intersection of coordination and national-level implementation. WP7 aims to empower National Focal Points (NFPs) to provide precise, locally adapted assistance to stakeholders by equipping them with practical tools, contextual strategies, and structured methodologies. The aim of the new joint action is to further center the capacities of National Focal Points at the national level to develop a joint strategy for these interventions.

Building on lessons from the previous joint action, WP7 will offer a structured suite of tools, including: annotated templates, communication plans, national action plans, and project design manuals. Additionally, a digital partner search repository will help connect applicants across countries, streamlining collaborative project development. Notably, these resources will not follow a one-size-fits-all approach; rather, they will be informed by a national self-assessment exercise conducted at the outset of the project. These plans will be concise, practical, and action-oriented—intended to reduce the burden on NFPs while maximizing their ability to reach stakeholders effectively. Complementing this, the work package includes mechanisms for active outreach, such as national info days, study visits, and staff exchanges, reinforcing the peer-to-peer learning dynamic central to the joint action's philosophy. In essence, WP7 serves as the operational engine that translates EU4Health's strategic objectives into concrete national interventions, tailored with flexibility and built for relevance.

## **Q&A and Discussion Summary**

One of the first topics to emerge was centered around the accessibility of the Knowledge Hub. It was noted that while the hub was initially restricted to consortium members, there was openness to expanding access to key stakeholders such as HaDEA.

The importance of having a clear, actionable advocacy strategy was raised. The need to define targets and outcomes was emphasized, particularly within the context of national action plans. WP7 clarified that the national action plans would be concise and functional and would include agile tools based on each country's own assessment of needs. These would help guide NFPs in delivering practical support to stakeholders and effectively promoting funding opportunities.

WP4 expanded on the advocacy element, explaining that a broad range of stakeholders would be engaged. Said stakeholders would range from public health institutions and civil society organizations to research entities and small- and medium-sized enterprises. It was explained that this engagement would be facilitated through strategic use of the EU Health Policy Platform and targeted webinars, ensuring a strong knowledge-sharing component at both national and European levels.

Additionally, the importance of not fragmenting communication efforts across too many channels was stressed. It was argued that a more focused approach would prevent dilution of energy and message. It was noted that WP2 had already anticipated this challenge. The strategy would integrate social media and website content in a unified and streamlined manner, ensuring coherence and ease of access for users.

ProMIS and the Italian Ministry of Health will continue maintaining communication channels during the period between the outgoing and incoming joint actions. An updated contact list and clear onboarding materials would circulate soon.





In conclusion, there was a large emphasis that communication within the joint action should be a shared task and that WP4 could serve as a connector across all other work packages, ensuring sustainability principles guided implementation, training, and evaluation. Finally, the importance of interconnected tools and structures, from the Knowledge Hub to thematic learning groups, was reiterated as essential.

### **Closing speech**

A. Marino (HaDEA) acknowledged the significance of what the National Focal Points had achieved so far, as well as the promising work still to come. He highlighted how the importance of the NFPs had become increasingly clear, not just within HaDEA, but across the European institutions including DG SANTE. NFPs are not only formally recognized actors but true “co-owners” of the EU4Health programme. Their roles go far beyond participation; in fact, they help shape and deliver the programme’s future. As the programme expands, the NFPs must keep pace with the changing landscape of EU health policy, upcoming institutional shifts like the new European Commission, and the approaching Multiannual Financial Framework. These future changes will then redefine priorities. He suggested that a milestone was reached, but there is still the need to be ready for new challenges ahead.

The meeting concluded suggesting this event was not the end, but a renewed beginning waiting for NFP4Health2.

