



2025 Strategic Foresight Report

Strengthening Resilience through Public Health Foresight

Public Consultation

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1. Summary

Founded in 1992, the **European Public Health Association (EUPHA)** is a leading umbrella organization connecting researchers, policymakers, and public health professionals across Europe. Operating in 53 WHO European Region countries, including all 27 EU Member States, EUPHA has 87 member organizations, organizes the **European Public Health Conference** (2,000+ professionals), coordinates the **European Public Health Week**, and publishes the **European Journal of Public Health**, a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

In an era marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, the European Union faces mounting global challenges that demand a **forward-looking and adaptive policy framework**. **Strategic foresight offers a systematic and collaborative approach to analyzing multiple possible futures**, ensuring that **public health remains resilient in the face of emerging risks and transformative societal shifts**.

The European Commission has underscored resilience as a key pillar of its Strategic Foresight Reports, framing it as the capacity to anticipate, withstand, and adapt to disruptions while maintaining core functions. This approach to resilience spans across economic, social, geopolitical, and environmental dimensions, emphasizing the need for cross-sectoral synergies and long-term preparedness. **Public health, as a foundational element of European resilience, must integrate foresight methodologies to remain agile in an evolving global landscape.**

This document, leveraging the knowledge and expertise of **one of EUPHA's 28 dedicated thematic sections**, prepared by EUPHA, responds to the European Commission's public consultation on the 2025 Strategic Foresight Report. It highlights the **urgent need to institutionalize foresight within public health policymaking, ensuring that Europe can anticipate and effectively respond to future health challenges**. By strengthening scenario planning, investing in AI-driven early warning systems, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, we can move towards a **future-proof public health system** that is equipped to **manage uncertainties, mitigate risks, and enhance societal well-being**.

The recommendations outlined in this document are **informed by leading foresight studies, scenario analysis, and policy evaluations**. They present a structured framework for embedding resilience into public health governance, offering concrete actions to align with the European Commission's broader foresight strategy. **As public health threats grow increasingly interconnected with climate change, digital transformation, security risks, and demographic shifts, foresight must evolve into a central instrument of European policy, ensuring that preparedness is proactive rather than reactive.**

Key recommendations

1. **Establish foresight in EU public health policy** by creating a dedicated process for long-term strategic planning to enhance resilience.
2. **Enhance cross-sector collaboration** by aligning public health foresight with climate adaptation, digitalization, and security policies to ensure a holistic approach.
3. **Strengthen scenario planning** by identifying and preparing for geopolitical, climate, technological, and socio-cultural uncertainties to improve preparedness.
4. **Use AI for early warning systems** by implementing AI-driven foresight tools for weak signal detection and real-time crisis response.
5. **Integrate climate foresight in health policy** by ensuring proactive adaptation to environmental and public health challenges to mitigate risks.
6. **Future-proof healthcare infrastructure** by building resilient, energy-efficient, and adaptable systems to meet evolving public health needs.
7. **Promote participatory foresight** by engaging policymakers, researchers, and civil society to shape inclusive and future-ready health strategies.
8. **Invest in public health foresight capacity** by developing training programs and fostering knowledge exchange across EU institutions to strengthen expertise.
9. **Develop an EU-wide resilience framework** by reinforcing preparedness for pandemics, AMR, and demographic shifts to safeguard public health.
10. **Translate foresight into policy action** by establishing mechanisms to integrate foresight insights into decision-making to ensure future-readiness.

2. Foresight and public health resilience

Foresight in public health is essential for anticipating future challenges and ensuring resilience. **Compared to climate change, technological innovation, and economic forecasting, strategic foresight in public health remains underdeveloped.** While these fields have successfully institutionalized foresight-driven approaches, public health has been slower to adopt systematic foresight methodologies. **To ensure resilience, public health foresight must catch up with these domains by leveraging existing expertise, mobilizing resources, and investing in capacity-building initiatives.**

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Establish a structured foresight process within EU public health policymaking
- ★ Develop long-term resilience strategies that address pandemics, AMR, and biosecurity risks.
- ★ Strengthen knowledge-sharing mechanisms between foresight practitioners and policymakers.

3. Developing health scenarios to address broad uncertainties

Health foresight must extend beyond biomedical threats to consider a wide range of uncertainties, including geopolitical shifts, climate change, socio-cultural transformations, and technological disruptions. Scenario planning must account for these diverse influences, allowing policymakers to imagine futures that significantly differ from our current reality. By **embracing uncertainty**, we can develop adaptable and resilient health policies that remain effective under multiple future conditions.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Expand scenario planning to encompass geopolitical, social, economic, and technological uncertainties.
- ★ Use foresight to explore transformative changes in health security and preparedness.
- ★ Enhance interdisciplinary collaboration to improve the quality of scenario development.

4. Addressing shared European public health challenges

Across Europe, public health challenges exhibit strong similarities, particularly concerning the **ageing population and its far-reaching impact on disease burden**, formal and informal healthcare structures, and overall quality of life. Our societies are not yet adequately prepared to manage these long-term demographic changes. Foresight can provide the tools necessary to **anticipate these transformations**, allowing countries to **share best practices and implement forward-thinking strategies that enhance preparedness**.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Strengthen cross-country cooperation to address shared European health challenges.
- ★ Use foresight to anticipate the socio-economic consequences of an ageing population.
- ★ Invest in policy interventions that ensure preparedness for future demographic shifts.

5. Foresight-informed policy strategies: moving beyond evidence-based approaches

While **evidence-based** policymaking remains essential, it must be complemented by **foresight-informed** approaches that account for uncertainties and alternative futures. Policy development should integrate **both empirical data and speculative projections** to navigate the complexity of future public health landscapes. This **dual approach** will **enable more adaptive, resilient policy frameworks** that can respond effectively to emerging challenges.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Integrate foresight-driven methodologies into EU health policymaking.
- ★ Establish evaluation frameworks that blend foresight insights with evidence-based decision-making.
- ★ Promote the use of anticipatory governance to ensure adaptability in public health strategies.

6. Accounting for normative uncertainties in health prioritization

Strategic foresight must recognize that **different stakeholders have varying priorities regarding public health outcomes. Some may prioritize longevity, while others emphasize quality of life, reducing health inequalities, or minimizing healthcare expenditures.** These normative values should be **explicitly acknowledged and incorporated into foresight methodologies** to ensure that public health strategies align with diverse societal expectations.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Incorporate ethical and value-based considerations into foresight analysis.
- ★ Ensure transparency in decision-making regarding long-term public health priorities.
- ★ Engage diverse stakeholders in defining desirable health futures.

7. The need for a long-term perspective in public health foresight

Public health transformations are slow and require long-term strategies that extend over several decades. To achieve **meaningful and sustainable outcomes, foresight initiatives must adopt a multi-decade horizon** while ensuring that **immediate policies align with long-term objectives**. Policymakers must integrate long-range forecasting into their planning processes, ensuring that today's decisions contribute to future resilience.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Extend foresight timeframes to several decades to anticipate gradual health transformations.
- ★ Align short-term policy measures with long-term resilience goals.
- ★ Promote continuous adaptation of public health strategies based on emerging foresight insights.

8. Weak signal detection and AI-driven foresight

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of better detecting weak signals—subtle indicators of potential public health crises that may otherwise go unnoticed. **AI and big data analytics offer promising tools to systematically identify and analyze weak signals, enabling early interventions.** Strengthening our capacity for weak signal detection will be critical in preventing future health crises and ensuring timely response mechanisms.

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Leverage AI-driven tools for real-time weak signal detection in public health.
- ★ Enhance predictive analytics to identify early indicators of health security threats.
- ★ Develop systematic approaches for integrating weak signals into health policy decision-making.

9. Supporting capacity building in public health foresight

Foresight remains a **fragmented discipline** in public health, with **limited structured collaboration between practitioners and policymakers**. Strengthening the exchange of expertise and methodologies should be a high priority. **As a leading European public health network, EUPHA can play a pivotal role in fostering foresight capacity-building efforts, facilitating knowledge-sharing, and positioning foresight as a fundamental pillar of health governance.**

We recommend the Commission to:

- ★ Support structured foresight training and knowledge exchange across EU institutions.
- ★ Promote interdisciplinary research on foresight methodologies in public health.
- ★ Establish EUPHA as a central hub for foresight expertise and capacity building.

Conclusion

Public health foresight must evolve to match the strategic depth and influence seen in other disciplines. By incorporating broad uncertainty analysis, addressing shared European challenges, and leveraging AI-driven weak signal detection, we can build a more resilient and adaptive public health system. **EUPHA's leadership in fostering foresight capacity and promoting long-term health strategies will be instrumental in ensuring that public health remains at the forefront of European policy development.**