

HEALTH CLUSTER

ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2026

CLUSTER DESCRIPTION AND KEY PRIORITIES

[ERRIN's Health Cluster](#) provides a space for ERRIN members to align their efforts to address key EU priorities and strengthen the R&I capacities of the regional innovation ecosystems in health. The Working Group actively monitors and engages with major EU priorities, strategies and instruments, including the **Horizon Europe Programme**, its **partnerships** and its [Mission on Cancer](#), as well as the **EU4Health programme**. It gathers intelligence to support the role of regions in the EU research and innovation policy landscape and facilitates interregional knowledge-sharing.

Further strategic initiatives of interest to the Working Group in 2026 are the **Beating Cancer Plan**, the **EU Life Science Strategy** and **Biotech Act**, the EU **pharmaceutical reform**, the **Large-Scale Partnerships on skills** in health, the **Regional Innovation Valleys** tackling health, the **European Health Data Space** and the **AI Act**.

Thematic areas of interest to the group include **digital transformation of health and care**, **One Health** approach, **prevention**, in particular in relation to the **ageing population** in Europe and mental health, and **environmental impact** of health care. In 2026, the Health Working Group aims to team up with other ERRIN Working Groups to find synergies around some of these topics. More details about the Working Group and projects of strategic interest can be found at the end of this file.

Finally, specific attention will be given towards Health topics that are part of broader transversal EU-level priorities such as resilience, strategic autonomy and circularity. Examples include the Critical Medicines Act and ongoing activities tied to circular hospitals.

CLUSTER CALENDAR

Date	Topic	Responsible
30 January	2026 Kick-off meeting Health WG: EU 2026 Health Agenda with DG SANTE and the EU Biotech Act I	Health WG
23 June	Next Generation of Healthcare: Resilience and Circularity	Health WG
7 October	The Biotech Act II and Life Science Strategy: Bioindustry in the regions	Health WG Bioeconomy WG
4 November	AI in Healthcare	Health WG ICT WG

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

ERRIN-EUREGHA Joint Online Meeting: National Cancer Mission Hubs and Integrating the Regional Dimension

22 September | 14:00–15:30

Health WG

Online

Kicking off ERRIN's participation in the ECHOS II project, this interactive online meeting co-organised by ERRIN's Health Working Group and EUREGHA's Cancer Working Group will focus on mapping clusters and pathways to facilitate the strategic integration of regional and local ecosystems into National Cancer Mission Hubs (NCMHs). As a continuation and evolution of the ECHoS project, ECHoS II is poised to play a pivotal role in advancing the EU Cancer Mission by embedding its objectives deeper into Europe's oncology landscape.

The session aims to refresh and reinforce dialogue on the strategic positioning of regional actors in cancer research, innovation and care delivery. By addressing fragmentation, fostering multi-level governance and creating synergistic linkages between regional ecosystems and NCMHs, the discussion will explore how ECHoS II can serve as a backbone for cutting-edge research, innovative therapies, and patient-centric policies. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that regional integration, with a particular eye on existing cancer ecosystems and key collaborative frameworks, strengthens the EU Cancer Mission's capacity to drive transformative change in oncology, with patients remaining at the core of EU health policy.

The Biotech Act II and Life Sciences Strategy: Bioindustry in the regions

7 October

Health WG, supported by Bioeconomy WG

Responsible co-leader: Cédric Daumas

In-person

Biotechnology and the wider life sciences sector are central to Europe's competitiveness, health security, and strategic autonomy. Building on existing initiatives, the forthcoming Biotech Act II and the EU Life Sciences Strategy are expected to further strengthen Europe's bio-industrial base, accelerate innovation and improve the translation of research into marketable solutions. Regions play a pivotal role in this ecosystem, hosting research infrastructures, innovation clusters, SMEs and scale-ups that drive bio-based value chains.

The success of these EU-level strategies will depend on their effective territorial implementation. This includes addressing regional disparities, supporting skills development, facilitating access to finance and enabling regulatory and infrastructure conditions that allow bio-industries to grow sustainably. Aligning regional smart specialisation strategies with emerging EU priorities in biotechnology, health, and industrial policy will be key to maximising impact and ensuring that regions can fully benefit from upcoming legislative and funding initiatives.

This session is designed to provide a platform for regions and stakeholders to:

- examine the objectives and expected implications of the Biotech Act II and the EU Life Sciences Strategy for regional bio-industries,
- highlight regional ecosystems, clusters and policy approaches supporting biotechnology and life sciences,
- identify funding instruments and cooperation opportunities that can strengthen regional bio-industrial development across Europe.

AI in Healthcare

4 November | 14:00–16:00

Health WG, ICT WG

Responsible co-leaders: Louise Årebäck and Romain Wascot

In-person

The digital transformation of health and care services is of central interest to a large number of ERRIN members. The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is going at a more rapid pace than ever, also expanding into the health and care sector with initiatives such as telehealth. The advancements in AI technology present unprecedented opportunities to revolutionise healthcare, making it more effective, accessible and economically sustainable.

AI can facilitate the efficient allocation of healthcare resources. Predictive modelling can forecast patient admissions and optimise the use of hospital beds, staff, and equipment. AI also has the potential to tackle some of the most pressing challenges in healthcare, such as rising costs, inefficiencies, and the demand for higher-quality care. However, the integration of AI into the health and care sector is not without challenges. Advancing AI in the health sector requires several critical components, such as trust building and acceptance of AI as well as its deployment in clinical practice. Access to high-quality health data, measures to foster AI innovation and ensuring that AI systems used in medicine are both safe and trustworthy are essential to successfully unlock the potential of AI in health.

Given the intertwined nature of health and ICT, this session is designed to foster the exchange of best practices between the health and ICT working group members. The session will aim to

- showcase innovative practices from regions and cities that can serve as inspiration for others,
- explore the policy landscape surrounding digital health and the integration of AI
- provide insights into digital funding opportunities for cities and regions within this context.

PAST ACTIVITIES

Kick-off meeting Health Working Group and the EU 2025 Health Agenda with DG SANTE

30 January | 10:30–13:00

Health WG

Responsible leaders: Maria Tørnsø Østergaard, Beatriz Irala Aliaga

In person followed by a networking lunch

This first session of the year will offer an opportunity for all ERRIN members of the Health Working Group to come together to network and jointly kick off the activities for 2026.

Marta Moya Díaz, Head of Unit Inter-institutional relations (A2), DG SANTE, will present the European Commission's ongoing and planned initiatives for 2026. The Working Group leaders will present the annual work plan for 2026, providing an opportunity for members to familiarise themselves with the planned activities and discuss their potential involvement. This will also include a dedicated intervention introducing the Biotech Act I which will be given by Joeri Boterman (Policy Officer, DG SANTE).

We will conclude with a networking lunch to get to know one another and to identify areas for potential collaboration between regional and local representatives. This networking and information session is directed towards Brussels-based colleagues and taking place in person at the ERRIN offices.

Next Generation of Healthcare: Resilience and Circularity

23 June | 14:00–16:00

Health WG

Responsible co-leaders: Maria Tørnsø Østergaard, Jordi Just

In-person

European healthcare systems are operating under increasing pressure from demographic change, workforce shortages, climate impacts and rising costs. Strengthening the resilience of health systems while transitioning towards more circular models of care has therefore become a strategic priority for regions and cities. Circularity in healthcare – covering areas such as sustainable procurement, waste reduction, reuse of medical materials, energy efficiency and resilient supply chains – offers a pathway to reduce environmental impact while improving system robustness and long-term viability.

At the same time, resilient healthcare systems must be capable of anticipating, absorbing, and adapting to shocks, whether driven by public health crises, climate-related events, or disruptions to critical resources. Integrating circular economy principles into healthcare planning can enhance preparedness, reduce dependencies, and support continuity of care, while aligning with broader EU objectives such as the Clean Industrial Deal and health resilience agendas. However, translating these concepts into practice requires cross-sector collaboration, regulatory clarity, investment and the exchange of proven regional solutions.

This session aims to bring together health, sustainability and innovation stakeholders to:

- showcase regional and local practices that strengthen healthcare resilience through circular approaches,
- explore EU policy frameworks and initiatives linking health, sustainability and resilience,
- discuss funding and collaboration opportunities supporting the transition to resilient and circular healthcare systems in regions and cities.

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTPUTS IN ERRIN PROJECTS

The Working Group will actively monitor and promote opportunities for engagement in Horizon Europe cluster 1, Mission on Cancer, European Partnerships in health, such as the THCS partnership, and the EU4Health programme.

In response to the ongoing developments tied to the upcoming Horizon programme and the European Competitiveness Fund, the ERRIN Health WG **will be publishing a cluster-level position paper on the future of Healthcare in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework.**

CEPS Apply AI Task Force on AI in Healthcare: ERRIN's Health WG will be participating within the **CEPS Apply AI Task Force**, specifically covering track 1 on **AI in Healthcare**. The Task Force runs from June 2026 to February 2027, structured around nine sector-specific working sessions running June through December, followed by a drafting and member review phase, and a Final Report launch in February 2027.

Relevant call topics will be made available via the **ERRIN [Project Development Tool](#)**. For topics with significant interest from members and sufficient time to deadline, the Working Group will consider organising coffee meetings to facilitate collaboration.

The Working Group is specifically engaged with the **[ECHO-S project](#)**, coordinating the national Cancer Mission Hubs, for opportunities to engage regions in this important initiative. The WG has now been elevated as an official project partner of **ECHOS II**.

As a key partner in ECHOS II, ERRIN will play a central role in mobilising regional and local stakeholders to ensure the project's success and sustainability. ERRIN will mobilise its network of regions, cities, and innovation actors to participate in NCMHs and related activities, advocate for the integration of the regional and place-based dimension in national and European cancer policies and facilitate regional workshops and roundtables to discuss local challenges and opportunities.

ERRIN will also build regional capacity, mainly through the work of its Health Working Group, and support the development of regional action plans aligned with the EU Cancer Mission. Furthermore, ERRIN will represent regional interests in European policy discussions, contribute to ERRIN's policy positions on the EU Cancer Mission and ensure that regional voices are heard in the design and implementation of NCMHs. This will include tailored efforts toward amended the KPIs and monitoring framework of the original ECHOS I project towards including regional KPIs that are impact-oriented and fit-for-purpose.

[Preparatory Action: Innovation for Place-based Transformation](#)

The EU Preparatory Action 'Innovation for place-based transformation' aims to empower territories to support policy practitioners through awareness raising, building capacities, and engaging in policy experimentation activities. This initiative is dedicated to advancing innovation and policy development across EU regions and beyond. The action will take place from 2024 to 2026, with a focus on addressing complex local and global challenges through transformative innovation approaches. The action will involve a combination of capacity building, experimentation journeys, and policy discussions to create a sustainable innovation loop.

ERRIN, as part of a broader consortium, is taking a leading role the execution of the project and the ERRIN Health Working Group in particular is heavily engaged in supporting the Capacity Building and Experimentation Journey streams tied to ‘Digital Citizen Services and healthcare’.

OTHER PROJECTS OF STRATEGIC INTEREST TO THE WORKING GROUP:

BeWell: Blueprint alliance for a future health workforce strategy on digital and green skills
Healthcare Regional Innovation Valley’s:

- PRECISEU: Personalised medicine Empowerment Connecting Innovation ecosystems across Europe
- UNITE: European Digital Health Valleys

OTHER ISSUES/TOPICS/NETWORKS TO BE MONITORED:

The Health Working Group will continue building alliances with other networks relevant to its priorities, notably **EUREGHA** and **Mental Health Europe**.

In between Working Group meetings, the leaders will maintain contact with the **Cancer Mission secretariat** in sync with the overall ERRIN advocacy on Missions. The group is planning to organise an informal lunch-and-learn exchange between members about the **general differences, opportunities and challenges between the health care systems** of countries/regions in addition to the four meetings foreseen.

LEADERS:

Health Working Group

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HEALTH CLUSTER 2026 TIMELINE



