

# EU earmarks 30 billion euros for health crisis agency

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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen puts on her protective face mask after delivering a State of the Union Address at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021. Stung by the swift collapse of the Afghan army and the chaotic U.S.-led evacuation through Kabul airport, the European Union on Wednesday unveiled new plans to develop its own defense capacities to try to ensure that it has more freedom to act in future crises. Credit: Yves Herman, Pool via AP

The European Union said Thursday that it will fund its new health preparedness and rapid response agency to the tune of 30 billion euros (\$35 billion) over the next six years, even pushing it higher if individual efforts from the member nations and private sector are taken into account.

Caught off guard by the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the 27-nation bloc long lagged behind the U.S. and Britain in vaccination rates before regrouping and meeting its goal of having 70% of EU adults vaccinated this summer.

With Thursday's official launch of the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, or HERA, it wants to make sure the bloc will be ready when the next crisis strikes.

"We need to be better prepared for future health crises. HERA will establish new, adaptable production capacities and secure supply chains to help Europe react fast when needed," EU Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton said.

HERA will be able to draw from several of the EU's Byzantine budget lines for a total of almost 30 billion euros (\$35 billion). This however excludes investments at member nation level and from the [private sector](#).

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who first announced plans for such a medical response agency last year, said this week that the overall total until 2027 could reach 50 billion euros (\$59 billion) by 2027.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen walks in the chamber prior to delivering a State of the Union Address at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021. The European Union announced Wednesday it is committing 200 million more coronavirus vaccine doses to Africa to help curb the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale. Credit: Yves Herman, Pool via AP

During the crisis, the EU saw the limits of its health outreach because the essence of pandemic policies are still handled at national level. The EU was slow in getting the first shots in the arms of citizens and the public uproar about initial shortages was such that the need for HERA quickly became apparent.

"HERA will have the clout and budget to work with industry, [medical](#)

[experts](#), researchers and our global partners to make sure critical equipment, medicines and vaccines are swiftly available when and as necessary," European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas.

While some nations like the United States and Britain fully centered on getting their own people vaccinated first, the EU continued to export doses amid the pandemic. Von der Leyen stressed that on top of delivering 700 million vaccine doses to Europeans, the 27-nation bloc had also sent as many shots to 130 nations.

"We are the only region in the world to achieve this," she said in her State of the Union address on Wednesday.

HERA should be fully operational as of early next year.

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