



Health & Pandemics

Why does it matter?

Health touches every part of society. But today, global health governance is fragmented, inefficient, and incoherent.

The problem: too many actors and overlapping rules weaken the World Health Organization (WHO)'s coordinating role. Plus, limited financing and growing tensions thwart cooperation, and disputes over fair access to health products undermine trust.

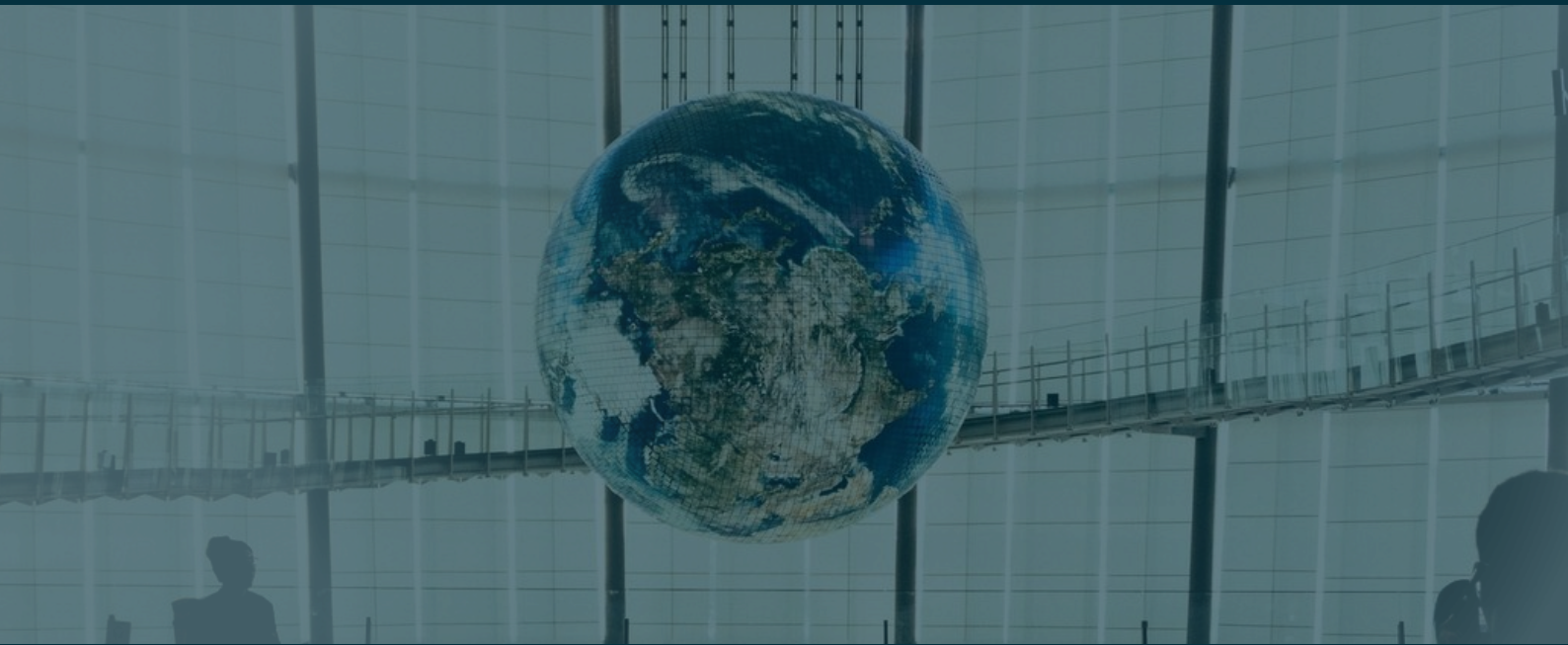
For the EU, this has serious consequences. Weak health governance increases the risk that future health crises will disrupt European societies, while limiting the EU's ability to respond quickly and effectively to protect its population.

Where is reform possible?

In global health, political divides make major reform unlikely. Instead, the most realistic options are incremental improvements to existing frameworks.

How? A key step would be to strengthen the WHO's role, including through more predictable financing and clearer responsibilities. Progress also depends on the success of the WHO's Pandemic Agreement, meaning states must finalise it, ratify it, and maintain the political will to see it through.

Further gains could include improving transparency and inclusiveness within the WHO, and better connecting EU policies around health, trade, and intellectual property.



What can the EU do about it?

- Reframe global-health spending as strategic investment, not just solidarity: link epidemic control to national security and supply-chain resilience to build domestic support for EU-level health commitments.
- Use the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034) to pool resources and build coalitions. The Global Europe Instrument could be a key tool for strengthening health partnerships with countries like Canada, South Africa, and Brazil.
- Shift WHO contributions from earmarked, project-based funding to long-term core funding, and link compliance with the Pandemic Agreement and International Health Regulations to fund allocation and representation in governing bodies.

Key Outputs



“The Intellectual Property and Public Health Regime Complex: Considerations on Vaccine Access and Equity.” by Óscar Fernández, Mirko Heinzl



“The WHO Pandemic Agreement: Bolstering Global Health Security Against Political Headwinds” by Óscar Fernández, Mirko Heinzl



“Reforming the World Health Organization After the COVID-19 Pandemic: Diagnosis and Prognosis” by Óscar Fernández, Mirko Heinzl