Event Report

Health Policy Leaders

2025 Edition

RPP

A PARITEE AGENCY

PRESENTED BY ***RPP GROUP***

Health Policy Leaders

25 FEBRUARY 2026 | 10:00 TO 12:00 | ROOM SPINELLI 5E1, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT




Hosted by
MEP Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatia)
MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/ EFA, Luxembourg)

10:00 – 10:10
WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
MEP JERKOVIĆ *(S&D, Croatia)*

10:10 – 10:20
THE EUROPEAN BIOTECH ACT: WHAT MUST HAPPEN IN 2026
MEP ANDRIUKAITIS *(S&D, Lithuania)*

10:20 – 10:30
WHAT IS THE HPL INDEX?
KINGA WÓJTOWICZ *Director Healthcare, RPP Group*

10:30 – 10:40
2026 AMBITIONS FOR A HEALTHY EUROPEAN UNION
MEP BOSSE *(Renew, Denmark)*

10:40 – 10:50
CRITICAL MEDICINES ACT: HOW THE EU WANTS TO SECURE SUPPLY
MEP SOKOL *(EPP, Croatia)*

10:50 – 11:10
WHY ARE WE FAILING TO SCALE AI IN HEALTH?
KATARINA VUJOVIĆ *Health Research Office at OECD*

11:10 – 11:25
THE 2026 GLOBAL OUTLOOK
LUTZ DOMMEL *CEO at RPP & Paritee Partner*

11:25 – 11:55
2026: THE IMPLEMENTATION YEAR
MEP Metz *(Greens/EFA, Luxembourg)*
MEP Kulja *(EPP, Hungary)*
MEP Temido *(S&D, Portugal)*
MEP Voiculescu *(Renew, Romania)*
MEP González Casares *(S&D, Spain)*

11:55 – 12:00
CLOSING REMARKS & AWARDS ATTRIBUTION
MEP Jerković *(S&D, Croatia)*
Kinga Wójtowicz *(Director Healthcare, RPP Group)*

Moderated by
KINGA WÓJTOWICZ
Director of EU Healthcare, RPP Group

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Executive summary

On 25 February 2026 the Health Policy Leaders (HPL) 2025 second edition took place at the European Parliament. Co-hosted by MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, Luxembourg) and MEP Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatia), the event successfully brought together 6 Members of the Parliament (MEPs) and over 50 attendees. The discussions focused on sharing key insights from the index, hearing keynotes about key European health policy topics, such as the role of AI and data in healthcare, workforce shortages, and equitable access to medicines, including rare diseases and critical treatments, and finally, presenting the ranking of the Top 10 MEPs.

The event emphasised the evidence-based methodology of the HPL index, which ranks MEPs according to legislative work, committee engagement, policy impact, and stakeholder recognition. Speakers reflected on achievements in 2025, such as progress in establishing strategies on mental health and workforce shortages, and the Critical Medicines Act. They also reflected on the importance of prioritising rare diseases, expanding AI adoption in healthcare, and ensuring equitable access to medicines across Member States. Moreover, MEPs shared their priorities for 2026, including the expansion of AI adoption, integrated health data systems across the EU Member States, and coordinated EU approaches to address workforce shortages.

The HPL initiative shed light on the importance of EU leadership in health policy, showcasing policymakers who drive meaningful change and inspiring continued engagement across the Parliament to ensure that health remains a political priority.





From Political Priority to Investment Reality: Health, Rare Diseases, and the next MFF

MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, Luxembourg)

Following an introduction by Kinga Wójtowicz (Event Moderator and Director at RPP Group), MEP Tilly Metz opened the discussion by reflecting on the first years of the SANT Committee, describing it as a new era for health policy in the European Parliament. Despite the increasing workload, the SANT Committee has ensured that health remains as a political priority. She stressed that health policy is shaped across multiple sectors, requiring sustained attention. She emphasised the importance of building strong coalitions to deliver tangible results for both patients and the healthcare sector. At the same time, MEP Metz acknowledged that defending the added value of EU in public health remains challenging. To strengthen its position, she argued that health must be framed not only as a societal priority, but also an economic one. Concluding, she cautioned against focusing solely on past achievements, calling instead for continued forward-looking ambition.

The Health Policy Leaders Index: Evidence-Based Insights into European Health Policy Influence

Kinga Wójtowicz (Director EU Healthcare, RPP Group)

Kinga Wójtowicz stated that in 2025, the second year of the European Parliament's SANT Committee provided an opportunity to reflect on who is shaping EU health policy and how influence is exercised within the legislative process. In this context, she explained that RPP conducted a comprehensive stakeholder analysis, complemented by an assessment using its AI-based Policy Insider tool and a review of four key influence factors; rapporteurship and legislative leadership, stakeholder networks, media visibility, and political group leadership to identify the most impactful health policy leaders. She stressed that the Health Policy Leaders (HPL) Index is evidence-based, drawing on several layers of data rather than opinion, and aims to provide a transparent picture of who is driving the European health agenda.

Beyond ranking policymakers and explaining the rationale behind their positions, the index seeks to inform and propose key political engagement priorities. It highlights influential MEPs shaping major legislative files, the Critical Medicines Act, the Safe Hearts Plan, the Biotech Act, Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, EU Health Workforce Crisis Plan, Crisis Preparedness Strategies, and the Critical Medicines Act, while also identifying broader policy themes dominating the agenda, including mental health challenges, healthcare workforce shortages, sustainable health financing across Member States, and the need for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to adequately recognise health as a strategic priority.

Health as Security: Prioritising Workforce and Rare Diseases

MEP András Kulja (EPP, Hungary)

MEP András Kulja reflected on his transition into European policymaking, noting that he entered politics without prior political experience. His primary motivation stemmed from witnessing the deterioration and fragmentation of the Hungarian healthcare system, which he said led to serious inequities in access to care. He identified his work within the European Parliament's SANT Committee as one of his key achievements, highlighting the shared values and objectives among its members.

Framing health as not merely a social policy domain but a security issue, Kulja emphasised that healthcare workforce shortages represent immediate threats to the resilience of European health systems. He argued for prioritising rare diseases, noting that addressing these complex challenges strengthens overall preparedness for future crises. While recognising that health remains primarily a Member State competence, he insisted that its security dimension justifies stronger and more coordinated EU-level action. Looking ahead to 2026, he underscored the importance of reinforcing collective commitment and ensuring that health remains high on the European political agenda.

From Discussion to Action: Investing in Health and Rare Diseases

MEP Stine Bosse (Renew Europe, Denmark)

MEP Stine Bosse urged policymakers to move from discussion to implementations, stressing that ambition must now be matched with concrete action and real investment, particularly in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). She called for a major European investment mechanism, the next IMF for health, which would be a major investment mechanism to drive efficiency and innovation. She argued that what can be done better and more cost-effectively should be pursued decisively.

Rare diseases were highlighted as a key priority. MEP Bosse noted that while individually rare at national level, collectively they represent a significant European challenge, with 95% of rare diseases still lacking treatment. She also emphasised the need for stronger investment in the European Health Data Space (EHDS) to ensure its effective implementation and warned that the pharmaceutical sector requires clear incentives to remain and produce in Europe.

AI in Healthcare: From Potential to Implementation

Katarina Vujović (Health Research Officer, OECD)

During her intervention, Katarina Vujović noted that while AI is now firmly on political agendas, its adoption in healthcare remains limited. OECD research shows that fewer healthcare professional are treating more patients, alongside persistent concerns around privacy and data security. She highlighted that misdiagnosis accounts for an estimated 18% of health expenditure in OECD countries, underlining AI's potential to improve accuracy, productivity, and patient care. However, she cautioned that investment does not automatically generate immediate productivity.

A key barrier to scaling AI is poor access and integration of health data, with access to health datasets sometimes taking up to 24 months, combined with limited trust and insufficient workforce preparedness. She concluded that stronger cooperation across countries will be essential to build readiness and share the benefits of AI in healthcare.

Patient Autonomy and Strategic Health Data, and the Critical Medicines Act

MEP Tomislav Sokol (EPP, Croatia)

MEP Tomislav Sokol discussed the key role of the European Health Data Space (EHDS), emphasising that its primary purpose is to give patients control over their personal health data. He stressed that patient autonomy must be protected, ensuring that data cannot be misused by companies to personalise services for commercial gain. While Member States value freedom and full autonomy in managing health data, MEP Sokol noted the need to strike a balance.

He also highlighted the importance of reinvesting funding to strengthen healthcare systems and improve equitable access. In the context of legislative priorities, such as the Critical Medicines Act, MEP Sokol underscored the need to guarantee quality access and preserve patient autonomy. Regarding innovative medicines, he noted that in the US, the focus is on treating pharma as an industry, with the main goal of getting companies to invest domestically. He argued that this reinforces the EU's need for strategic autonomy, including measures like joint procurement, since smaller Member States may otherwise face delays in accessing critical medicines.

2026 Global Outlook – Beyond Linear Thinking: Preparing for Healthcare shocks

Lutz Dommel (CEO, RPP Group)

Lutz Dommel reflected on the evolving role of healthcare within global policy, noting that multilateralism is increasingly embedded across international agendas. He warned that EU policymakers are often constrained by linear thinking, projecting today's trends gently into tomorrow, while the world increasingly develops through shocks, ruptures, and rapid geopolitical shifts.

He argues that this mindset leaves Europe reacting after crises, rather than anticipating them. He highlighted recurring patterns: supply chains are secured only after disruption, and free trade is defended only once tariffs are imposed. To address these challenges, he argued for a shift in perspective, urging policymakers, researchers, companies, and citizens to identify and protect what truly matters before it is threatened. For 2026, his core message was clear: leadership requires clarity before crisis and proactive protection of essential priorities rather than reactive measures.

2026: The Year for Implementation

MEP Marta Temido (S&D, Portugal), MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, Luxembourg), MEP Vlad Voiculescu (Renew, Romania)

On what they are most proud of in their work in 2025, MEP Temido highlighted her role in advancing discussions on the European healthcare workforce. MEP Voisulescu emphasised prioritising patients, evidence-based approaches, and the use of AI to manage data efficiently, noting the urgency of addressing unequitable access to cancer screening. MEP Metz focused on the Critical Medicines Act, aiming to make medications affordable for everybody. Moreover, she noted that in 2026 she will focus on giving workforce more recognition, and prioritising on EU attention to mental health promotion, stating that the Commission must be pressured to act. Moreover, she aims to work on the new exposome alliance, cancer and protecting the health of youth.

On the topic of workforce shortages, MEP Temido emphasised that policymakers are also advocates for health: without a functioning workforce, even the best strategies cannot be implemented. She highlighted the challenges of reporting on the workforce crisis due to EU competence and subsidiarity rules, stressing the need for a coordinated EU-level approach when Member States cannot act alone.

Moving beyond crisis management, she called for improving transformability, recognising that money alone is not the main driver, and addressing organisational factors that influence where professionals choose to work. Key priorities include increasing productivity, leveraging AI, and focusing on innovative solutions and workforce organisation to ensure that healthcare systems can deliver effectively.

Key Takeaways & Recommendations

- **Strengthening the Healthcare Workforce:** Coordinated EU action is essential to address shortages, improve organisation, and increase productivity. Investment in AI and investment in innovative workforce models can ensure that strategies are effectively implemented.
- **Scaling AI and Health Data Systems:** Faster access to integrated, interoperable datasets is critical to unlocking AI's potential. Trust-building measures and cross-country cooperation will support improved diagnosis, patient outcomes, and system efficiency.
- **Ensuring Equitable Access to Rare and Critical Medicines:** Policies must guarantee fair access to medicines across all Member States.
- **Evidence-Driven Policy and Leadership:** Tools like the HPL Index provide transparent insights into influence and impact. Using data to guide engagement ensures legislative priorities, such as mental health, workforce, and rare diseases.
- **Key Legislative Files:** Major EU health policies, such as the Critical Medicines Act, Safe Hearts Plan, and Biotech Act, are central to advancing patient care, ensuring equitable access, and supporting innovation in the healthcare sector.
- **Priorities for 2026:** Policymakers must focus on expanding AI adoption, integrating health data systems across Member States, reinforcing EU-level coordination on workforce shortages, and sustaining political attention and investment in rare diseases, mental health, and strategic health infrastructure.

What is RPP Group and the HPL index?

RPP Group is a European public affairs consultancy specialised in public policy, supporting organisations in understanding regulatory developments, shaping policy debates, and engaging with institutions, stakeholders, and alliances. Its commitment is to leverage sector-specific knowledge to drive meaningful change and contribute positively to communities.

The Health Policy Leaders Index ranks Members of the European Parliament according to their legislative work, committee engagement, policy impact, and stakeholder recognition. It is evidence-based, drawing on several layers of data rather than opinion, and aims to provide a transparent picture of who is driving the European health agenda.

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