
Unlocking the Potential of Paediatric Innovation in Europe



Across Europe, children represent the entirety of the continent's future, yet the development and adoption of innovations tailored to their healthcare needs remain insufficient. The ADD4KIDS European Action Plan, created by EIT Health and partners, outlines a comprehensive strategy to accelerate the implementation of demand-driven paediatric innovations. Informed by extensive stakeholder consultation, this action plan addresses systemic fragmentation, market failures, regulatory complexity and a lack of investment incentives that hinder progress. It also aims to foster collaboration and build a unified approach that can serve as a catalyst for the broader Single Market. By leveraging financial tools like Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP), Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI), Value-Based Procurement (VBP) and Social Impact Bonds (SIB), the plan offers a strategic roadmap for enabling timely, sustainable and impactful solutions for Europe's youngest citizens.

Building Capacity for Demand-Driven Innovation

The first strategic priority focuses on equipping stakeholders across the paediatric ecosystem to effectively utilise demand-driven procurement instruments. The action plan highlights a prevalent misconception: procurement is often seen as a mere administrative process rather than a strategic enabler of innovation. To change this perception, the plan proposes a range of capacity-building initiatives such as educational programmes, training for healthcare providers, innovation challenges and the development of digital tools that guide stakeholders in selecting the right financial instruments. These efforts aim to demystify procurement mechanisms, increase understanding of tools like PCP and PPI and enable healthcare providers to integrate them into their innovation pathways.

Support structures including a digital assessment platform and innovation vouchers are proposed to help providers navigate complex processes and reduce the knowledge gap. The ultimate goal is to ensure that procurement becomes a vehicle for achieving real-world healthcare transformation, especially in underserved paediatric areas.

Enhancing Investment and Funding Mechanisms

The second pillar of the plan targets the chronic underfunding of paediatric innovation. Startups and SMEs face significant hurdles transitioning from prototype to market-ready solutions, largely due to the absence of dedicated funding for this critical stage. This issue is compounded by the unique regulatory and ethical demands of paediatric trials, which require more resources, longer timelines and specialised protocols. To overcome these barriers, the plan advocates for the establishment of a strategic investor network and the launch of innovative financing models such as SIBs.

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By creating structured collaborations with scientific organisations, philanthropic bodies and investors—including those from the European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund—the initiative aims to diversify funding sources and attract capital tailored to the specific needs of paediatric innovation. These efforts also include designing incentives for insurers and payers to support the adoption of demand-driven solutions, ensuring that financial models align with improved outcomes for children. The strategy promotes blended finance approaches to derisk investments and accelerate the adoption of innovations that meet real paediatric needs.

Fostering Cross-Border Collaboration and Evaluation

A fundamental challenge to paediatric innovation adoption in Europe is fragmentation across Member States. The ADD4KIDS Action Plan addresses this by promoting strategic public-private partnerships and fostering pan-European cooperation. Twinning programmes, expansion of networks like i4KIDS-Europe and the creation of a European procurement strategic group are among the suggested measures to harmonise efforts. The plan also proposes tools to share innovation maturity data and orient practices around children's rights and needs. Complementing these collaborative measures is a strong emphasis on evaluation.

The final strategic line focuses on measuring the impact of innovation adoption through value-based healthcare metrics and self-assessment tools. Insurers and payers are encouraged to integrate these evaluations into funding decisions, supporting a shift from cost-based to outcome-based healthcare. The plan underlines the importance of continuous feedback loops and the use of annual assessment reports to drive informed decision-making, sustain momentum and ensure accountability in the innovation adoption process.

The ADD4KIDS European Action Plan represents a significant shift towards a more coordinated, inclusive and strategic approach to paediatric healthcare innovation. By combining demand-driven procurement with robust capacity-building, tailored funding mechanisms and cross-border cooperation, the plan provides a practical framework to overcome the persistent barriers in this sector. It empowers stakeholders to activate change through flexible, locally adapted actions while remaining aligned with broader European goals. If fully implemented, this roadmap can help transform paediatric innovation from a niche concern into a cornerstone of European health policy—ensuring that children across the continent benefit from timely, effective and equitable healthcare solutions.

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Published on : Wed, 14 May 2025