



HDHL

Healthy Diet Healthy Life

HDHL Strategy

Vision, Mission, and Objectives



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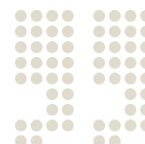


Vision

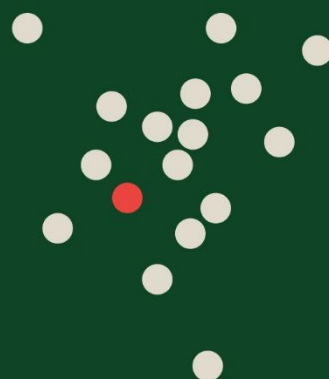
Healthy diets and healthy lives on a healthy planet, for all.

Mission

We address societal challenges at the intersection of food, nutrition and health, working in partnership to generate new evidence and foster knowledge mobilisation, enabling healthy and sustainable diets and lifestyles for all.



Where Evidence
Informs **Action**



About HDHL

Healthy Diet, Healthy Life (HDHL) was established in 2010 to promote healthier lifestyles with better diets and to prevent diet-related diseases. Over the years, HDHL has strengthened transnational research at the intersection of food systems, nutrition and health. Since its establishment, HDHL has successfully funded interdisciplinary consortia and addressed key societal questions that connect food, nutrition, and health. With its strong network of researchers, funders, policymakers, industry actors, and other stakeholders, HDHL is in a key position to continue addressing major research and policy challenges, particularly bridging research and policy, particularly between the food systems and health sectors.

Transitioning to a self-sustaining initiative in 2021, HDHL has continued to evolve. It now acts as an advisory platform, it aligns national and European research agendas, funds transnational research, and facilitates dialogues between sectors.

HDHL has played a strategic role in shaping European initiatives such as the Horizon Europe Partnerships and the Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) FOODPathS (preparatory action for FutureFoodS) and ERA4Health. Its third Strategic Research Agenda (2019) informed the development of several calls, further demonstrating HDHL's unique position in strengthening the European research and policy landscape while keeping food and health at its core.

We believe in healthy diets and healthy lives on a healthy planet, for all. We aim to address societal challenges at the intersection of food, nutrition and health, working in partnership to generate new evidence and foster knowledge mobilisation, enabling healthy and sustainable diets and lifestyles for all. With this renewed vision and mission, HDHL's work also contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

This Strategic Plan sets out HDHL's vision, mission, objectives, and strategic activities to strengthen the European research and policy landscape at the intersection of food, nutrition, and health. It will be regularly updated to reflect the ongoing evolution of HDHL





Navigating a Changing Landscape: HDHL's New Strategic Vision

Health, food, and nutrition challenges remain urgent

Many of the world's population remain food insecure, and both undernutrition and overnutrition are far too prevalent globally. Over 8.2% of the global population is undernourished, while unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles contributes to a growing burden of non-communicable diseases (FAO et al., 2025). Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are now responsible for around 90 % of all deaths in the WHO European Region (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2023). At the same time, the global food system accounts for approximately 30% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (EAT-Lancet Commission, 2025) and contribute to biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution (UNFCCC, 2023). These challenges will be further exacerbated, with the need to meet the food demands of a growing global population, and will continue to be influenced by wars and epidemics.

While the European Union's Missions and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with EAT Lancet 2.0 report, all set ambitious targets to tackle these interconnected challenges, progress remains slow. These challenges are complex and interconnected, requiring coordinated, evidence-based action at both European and national levels.

EU policy focus has shifted toward competitiveness and food security

Recent geopolitical developments, including a war on the European continent, have reshaped European Union (EU) policy priorities toward enhancing strategic autonomy, food security, and economic resilience. Competitiveness and security now dominates the political agenda, influencing research and funding decisions. This political agenda strongly influences the European funding landscape, shaping research and development priorities under Horizon Europe and beyond.

In recent years, the European research funding landscape has undergone a major transition from Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) to large-scale Horizon Europe Partnerships. While this evolution brings opportunities for broader collaboration and resources, it has also introduced increased complexity and bureaucratic challenges. Currently, health, nutrition, and food research are fragmented into separate clusters and partnerships, such as FutureFoods and ERA4Health. This fragmentation complicates cross-sector collaboration at a time when integrated, systems-level solutions are urgently needed.

Horizon Europe 2028-2034 signals yet another shift, with a strong emphasis on competitiveness, innovation, and strategic autonomy. In this fragmented funding context, there is clear need for integrated research at the nexus of food, nutrition, and health because

sustainable food systems and healthy populations are key conditions for enabling a competitive and resilient Europe.

HDHL supports integrated research to address the connection between health and sustainable food systems

Healthy populations and sustainable food systems are closely linked, and together form an important foundation for Europe's economic resilience. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires research that crosses traditional disciplinary and national boundaries. HDHL supports this integrated approach by aligning research agendas, promoting collaboration across food, nutrition, and health sectors, and fostering transdisciplinary solutions that address real-world challenges.

HDHL facilitates the mobilisation of research into action to enhance impact

In addition to integrated research, there is a growing need to focus on mobilising findings into policy and practical implementation. Turning research into meaningful impact involves early engagement with stakeholders and cooperation between science, policy, and practice. HDHL plays a key role in supporting this process by promoting implementation and helping to increase the use of evidence-based approaches for better health and sustainability outcomes. This dual focus on integrating research and translating it into action defines HDHL's strategic vision. It positions HDHL as a key player in Europe's evolving research and policy landscape, ensuring that scientific knowledge leads to effective, actionable change.

HDHL's strategic vision responds effectively to European challenges

In response to the rapidly changing European landscape, HDHL has crafted a strategic vision that addresses the critical gaps in research and policy. This strategy focuses on overcoming fragmentation between sectors, tackling challenges in implementation, and strengthening stakeholder engagement. By fostering coordination across food, nutrition, and health research and action, HDHL makes a vital contribution to achieving broader EU goals for health, sustainability- key foundations for future innovation, competitiveness, and growth.





Vision, Mission, and Objectives

Vision

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Mission

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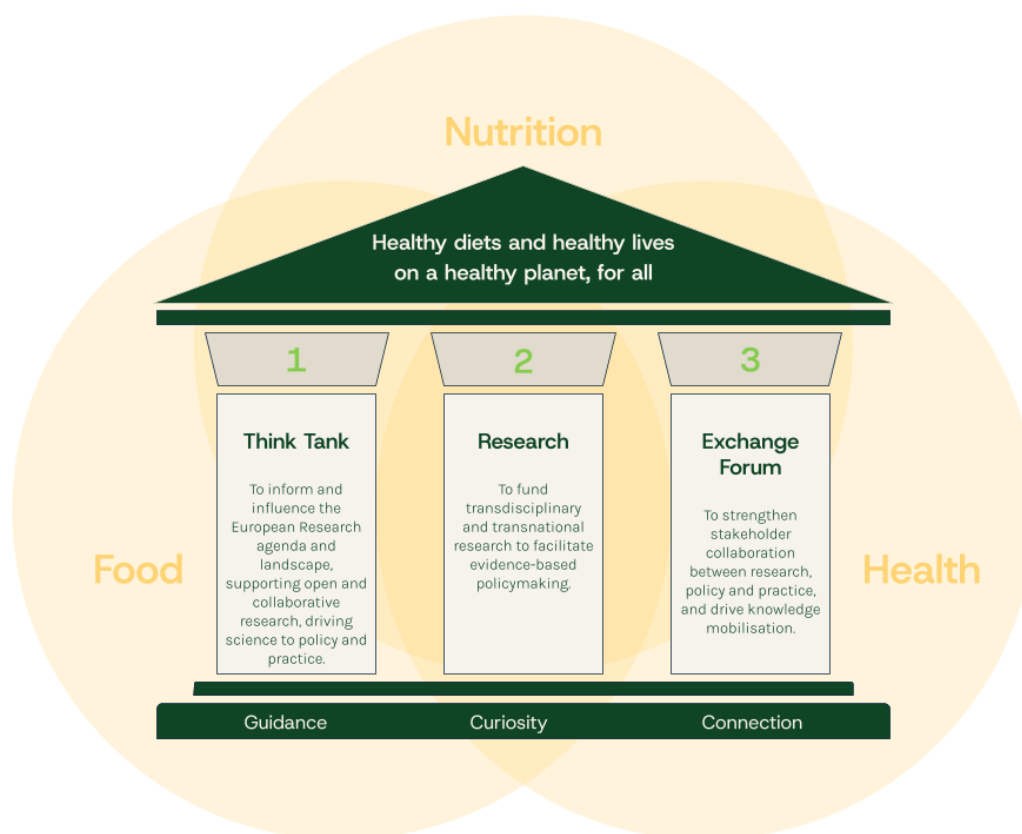


Figure 1 HDHL Vision and Objectives

Pillars of HDHL

HDHL operates through three core pillars that structure its activities based on its objectives. These are Think Tank, Research Funding and Stakeholder Engagement.



Pillar 1: Think Tank

Objective: To inform and influence the European Research agenda and landscape, supporting open and collaborative research, driving science to policy and practice, addressing challenges in food, nutrition and health.



HDHL's Think Tank gathers, structures, and processes knowledge from R&I projects (including HDHL and others) to provide expert advice and strategic input at national and EU levels. We aim to align HDHL with key policy frameworks, and strategically positioning our work in relation to the European Commission, Horizon Europe Partnerships, and others, we ensure our research and expertise is impactful and effectively integrated into contact for discussions with EC and other key stakeholders. This approach allows HDHL to inform research and policy agendas, shape debates, and influence decisions – always with the connection between food and health at the centre of these discussions – and ultimately influencing future research and policy.

Main Activities:

- **Provide expert advice and policy recommendations**
The Think Tank process will use research knowledge to create impact and provide (strategic) advice related to the legislative framework on particular matters of policy or society in the field of food, nutrition, and health. HDHL will develop and strengthen its role in advising a diverse range of stakeholders, in particular policy makers and researchers, directing their interest and contribution to the concept of science-based decision-making.
- **Align with European Commission and Horizon Partnerships**
HDHL has years of experience in the European funding landscape related to the food, nutrition and health area, but also with different funding mechanisms (ERA-net, Knowledge Hubs, etc.). This expertise and knowledge has proven beneficial to new partnerships under Horizon Europe (HE) and HDHL is naturally connected to and supporting the partnerships under HE such as ERA4Health and FutureFoodS. The aim is to decrease fragmentation in the food, nutrition, and health sectors.



HDHL's Think Tank role positions the initiative as the expert and trusted advisor on future challenges at the crossroads of food, nutrition, and health. Communication activities focus on developing and sharing policy briefs, position papers, and strategic reflections; engaging policymakers and strategic partners in meaningful dialogue; and maintaining visibility as a thought leader through participation in high-level forums and expert panels.



Pillar 2: Research

Objective: To fund transdisciplinary and transnational research to facilitate evidence-based policymaking that addresses key societal challenges at the intersection of food, nutrition, and health.



HDHL facilitates alignment of research priorities among national and international funding programmes, to drive impactful research in food, nutrition, and health. Through strategic transnational research funding calls, HDHL supports projects that address key gaps and align with the most pressing societal and policy needs. By stimulating research that has real-world applications, HDHL aims to maximise the impact of funded projects, ensuring that research outcomes contribute to healthy diets, healthy lives, and a healthy planet.

Main Activities:

- **Set joint funding priorities and fund transnational research**

One of the ways in which HDHL works on achieving its goal is by stimulating and funding research in three areas, namely:

1. citizens, diet and behaviour,
2. food for health,
3. diet, health and disease.

HDHL aligns research priorities and implements so-called Joint Funding Actions (JFAs) based on the principle of variable geometry. This means that countries or funding organisations decide on a call-by-call basis whether they will participate in a JFA and how much they will contribute.

- **Funding mechanism and innovation**

Depending on the desired outcomes and topic of a joint funding action, HDHL may launch either a *research call*—supporting experimental and applied research—or a *knowledge hub call*, which advances scientific understanding by synthesising existing evidence through systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or other integrative approaches to inform policy and practice. HDHL ensures that all funded projects adhere to FAIR data principles and submit a data management plan. Projects are encouraged to communicate their findings in formats that reach and engage relevant target audiences, as part of their Communication and Dissemination plans. Looking ahead, HDHL aims to further enhance the effectiveness of its funding mechanisms and maximise impact by exploring new dimensions such as addressing health inequalities and inclusiveness, leveraging artificial intelligence in research proposals and analysis, and integrating lessons learned from collaboration processes alongside scientific outcomes.

- **Stimulate impact**

HDHL bridges the gap between science and society by supporting researchers in translating evidence into real-world solutions. By fostering collaboration among scientists, policymakers, and practitioners, HDHL ensures that research findings inform policy, guide practice, and contribute to healthier diets, improved public health, and more sustainable food systems. To strengthen this pathway from knowledge to impact, HDHL promotes innovation and entrepreneurial thinking within research communities—empowering scientists to co-create actionable solutions, develop novel approaches, and engage stakeholders early in the process to ensure that outcomes are relevant, usable, and scalable.



HDHL aims to position itself as a trusted partner in coordinating and funding interdisciplinary research tackling societal challenges in food and health. Communication efforts focus on promoting HDHL research calls, showcasing the outcomes and impact of funded projects, and facilitating knowledge exchange and networking among researchers across countries and disciplines.

Pillar 3: Stakeholder Engagement

Objective: To strengthen stakeholder collaboration between research, policy and practice, and drive knowledge mobilisation at the intersection of food and health.



HDHL aims to bring together actors from the food, nutrition, and health sectors to address key societal challenges. Through webinars, workshops, events, and other collaborative formats, and by involving a diverse range of stakeholders and decision-makers across the funding and policy spectrum—policymakers, researchers, industry, and civil society—HDHL facilitates stakeholder collaboration, mobilises evidence-based knowledge, and shares best practices to drive innovation in food and health systems. By enhancing the visibility of HDHL and its engagement in EU-funded projects and HDHL-supported initiatives, the platform ensures effective communication and strengthens connections across the food, nutrition, and health landscape.

Main Activities:

- **Facilitate stakeholder dialogues**

HDHL fosters dialogue between relevant stakeholders and actively participates in discussions at regional, national, and EU levels. By promoting science-to-policy communication, these dialogues strengthen connections across the food, nutrition, and health sectors, enhance policy coherence, and improve collaboration between

research and policy communities. Knowledge and insights generated from these exchanges also feed into HDHL's think tank outputs, including reaction papers, scientific spotlights, and policy briefs, amplifying the impact of research on decision-making.

- **HDHL Widening**

HDHL expands its network and facilitates interaction among stakeholders, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and awareness of the interlinkages between food, nutrition, and health sectors. The network also supports early-career scientists, encouraging knowledge exchange, shared learning, and interdisciplinary collaboration to build the next generation of leaders in nutrition and health research. Together, these activities enhance research capacity, strengthen international networks, and ensure that HDHL's evidence-based insights reach the audiences best positioned to translate them into practice.



HDHL seeks to position itself as a central connector facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange to accelerate the translation of research into policy and practice.

Communication activities include organising and promoting joint stakeholder events, workshops, and symposia; coordinating communication and dissemination efforts across partners and networks; and supporting knowledge mobilisation by sharing best practices, success stories, and tools with practitioners and policymakers.





HDHL Governance and Funding

HDHL has two primary funding streams: one from its member states and the other from the European Commission. This structure ensures that HDHL can effectively execute its activities while maintaining its independence and self-sustainability.

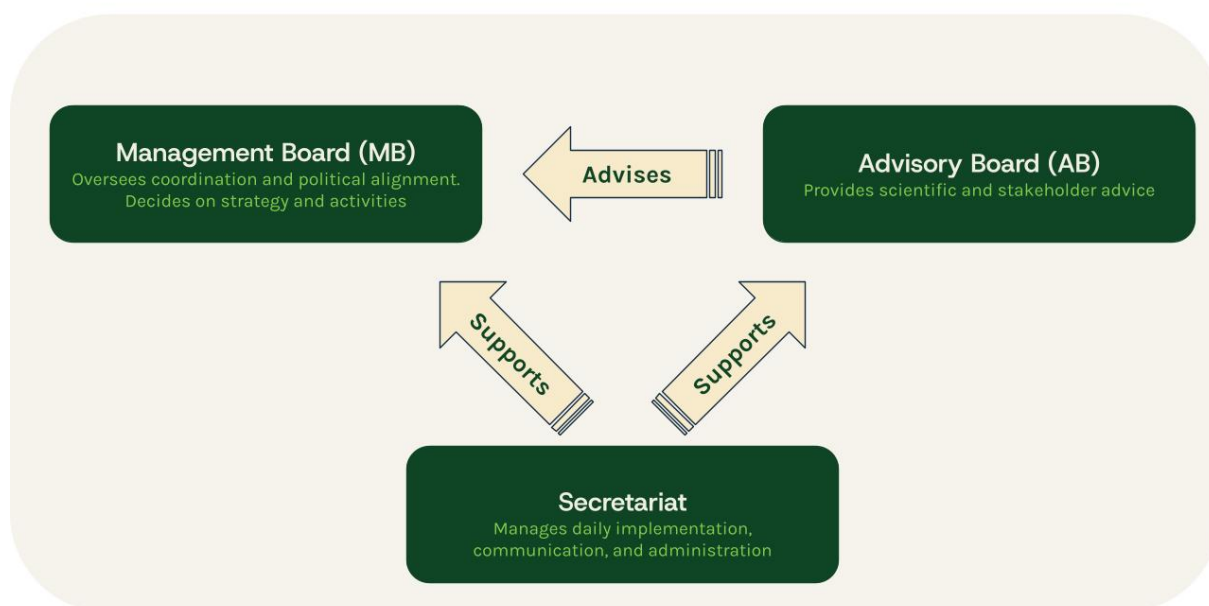


Figure 2 HDHL Governance

1. Funding from Member States

The funding provided by member states, represented in the Management Board, supports the HDHL secretariat, which is the operating body of HDHL executing the day-to-day activities. The Management Board is in charge of decision-making and setting the strategic direction of HDHL. The secretariat supports the Management Board in carrying out its decisions and activities. Additionally, the secretariat supports the Advisory Board, which plays a key role in independent advising the Management Board in order for them to make well-informed decisions. The Advisory Board is composed of both a College of Scientists and a college of Stakeholders.

2. Funding from the European Commission

HDHL also receives funding from the European Commission through its involvement in various Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs). These CSAs include:

CSA FOODPathS

FOODPathS aims to offer a concrete pathway and necessary tools to support the establishment of the European Partnership for a Sustainable Future of Food Systems (FutureFoodS). This Horizon Europe Partnership was launched in 2024 and used the outcomes of the FOODPathS project to build their work on. HDHL's tasks in FOODPathS involved analysing funding mechanism and advising funders and relevant bodies in the field of health and food systems. Furthermore, HDHL hosted webinars and podcasts.

CSA CLEVERFOOD

The CLEVERFOOD project aims to engage European citizens—ranging from youth and children to farmers, investors, researchers, and policymakers—in the transformation of Europe's food system. By fostering a more fair, healthy, circular, and plant-based approach, CLEVERFOOD will support ongoing and new projects, partnerships, and networks. Through collaboration, we seek to create a unified effort toward achieving a sustainable and resilient food system. HDHL's tasks in CLEVERFOOD involve facilitating 21 multi-level governance policy dialogues in seven European countries as well as facilitating two international roundtables.

CSA HDHL Food4Health

HDHL coordinates the CSA HDHL Food4Health (HDHL F4H). This project which is governed by a General Assembly which constitutes of one representative per partner in the project. In addition, it receives advice from a Strategic Board which includes external experts to provide independent advice and exchange of information.

HDHL F4H project will address the interconnected challenges of diet-related NCDs and climate change. Its main objective is to bring together the food and health domains as well as to connect quadruple helix stakeholders. Furthermore, it aims to align research and innovation priorities among research funding programmes by identifying research and policy needs in coordination with key stakeholders and initiatives. The project will facilitate co-creation workshops, widen the HDHL network and promote collaboration and knowledge exchange to shift towards a healthier and more sustainable dietary behaviour, ultimately contributing to improved public health and the UN SDGs.

Operationalisation of the HDHL Strategy



Action Plan

The concrete activities under each of HDHL's three core pillars are detailed in an action plan. This plan outlines priorities, planned actions, and expected outputs for the coming one – two years. It is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure responsiveness to emerging needs, alignment with strategic goals, and coherence across both member state-funded and EU-funded activities.



Communication Plan

HDHL will disseminate research outputs and results through various communication channels, including conferences, workshops, webinars, and an active online presence. By developing and sharing results from specific projects and calls, HDHL will increase the visibility of its research. The website, newsletter, and social media platforms will play a key role in ensuring broad outreach and engagement, keeping stakeholders informed and strengthening the overall impact of HDHL's work.

