

Bill Gates donates €54m to EU's African health services programme

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News

Bill Gates has joined forces with the European Union in a €100m clean energy investment fund.



Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates will contribute €54m in funding to an EU programme called “Breakthrough Energy Europe” that supports health services in Africa.

Gates said the funds will go towards maintaining existing EU efforts to strengthen diagnostic health services in Sub-Saharan Africa under the so-called External Investment Plan.

“Our foundation is delighted to partner with the European Commission to strengthen diagnostic services across Africa for the infectious diseases that still kill and harm the highest numbers of the world's poorest people,” Gates said on Wednesday at a joint news conference in Brussels, held with EU commissioner for research, science and innovation, Carlos Moedas.

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"By having better tools to more accurately identify these diseases, we can provide the right treatments at the right time and, ultimately, ensure more people across sub-Saharan Africa are able to live healthy and productive lives," Gates added.

For his part, Moedas said that the fund would help innovative European companies develop and bring radically new clean energy technologies to the market.

Later on Wednesday, Gates appeared at a meeting of the European Parliament's development committee together with the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG).

The public hearing on "Innovation in Development" was attended by MEPs, including committee chair, UK Socialist deputy Linda McAvan, and experts who debated the need for changes to development cooperation "to take into account global challenges" such as inequalities, conflicts and continuing migration flows.

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The second part of the hearing focused on Europe's role in international development and involved Gates and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

The commission described Gates' contribution as "significant" and welcomed his collaboration with the EU.

A spokesman said the collaboration will help mobilise private investment in laboratory facilities "providing timely, cost-effective and accurate" diagnostic services for diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV, and malaria, as well as support maternal and child healthcare.

She said this will allow doctors to detect diseases earlier, respond faster and better target treatments.

"Under this collaboration between the EU and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, poorer people in low-income African countries will have better access to higher quality testing and, therefore, better chances of proper treatment."

The programme follows the announcement by Gates and commission president Jean-Claude Juncker to contribute €40.9m in financing and €10.2m in technical assistance to investment projects in Africa's health sector.

The Commission matched the contribution with another €50m.

Speaking on Wednesday, EU commissioner for international cooperation and development Neven Mimica, said: "Together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we are showcasing the EU's engagement in Africa."

"Through the Gates Foundation's contribution of €54 million to our External Investment Plan, we will unlock private investment in a sector where additional investments in state-of-the-art testing facilities are urgently needed in order to meet the health needs of ample sectors of the population."

"This also shows that our approach under the 'Africa - Europe Alliance' works and is attractive to other stakeholders," Mimica added.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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