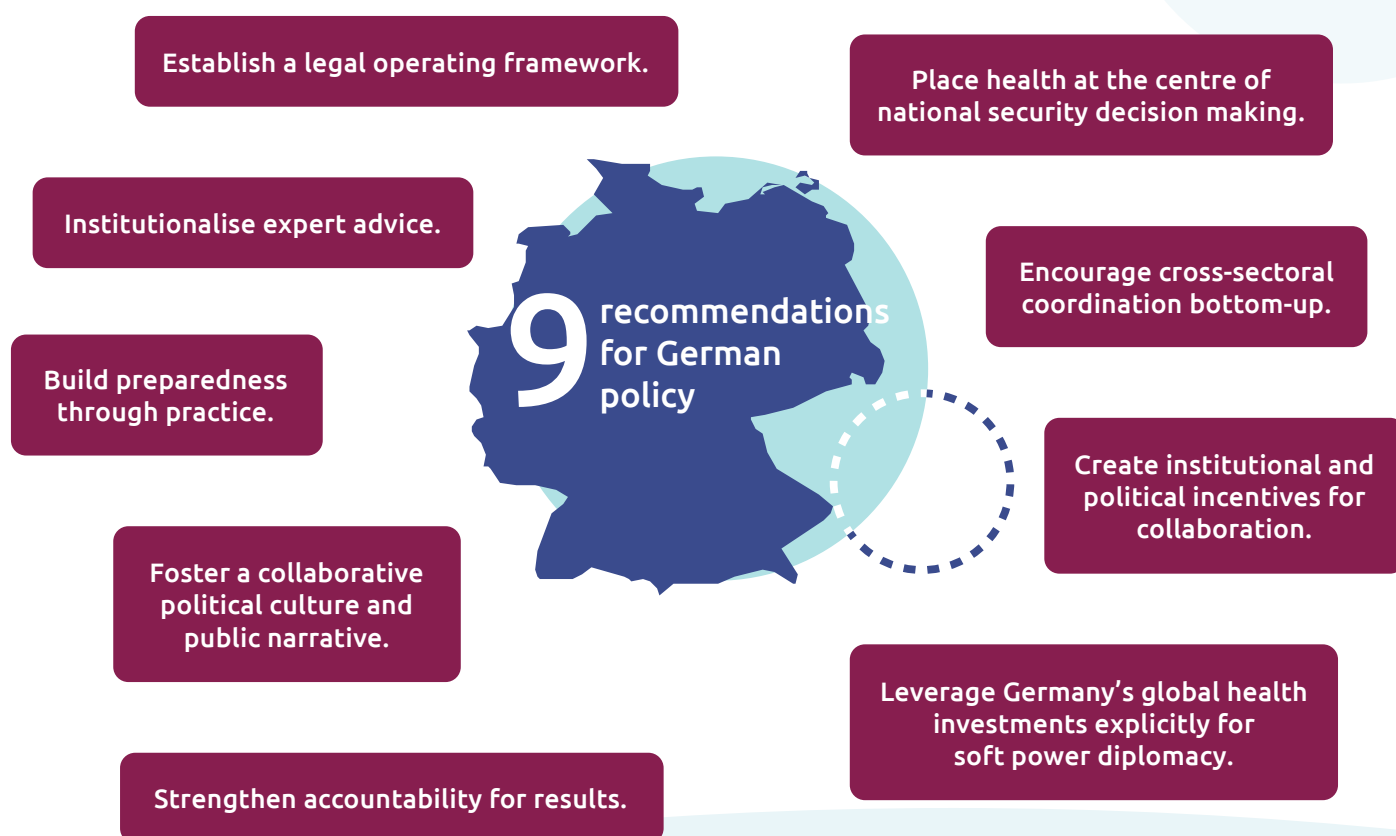


# Health Security Beyond the Health Ministry: The Case for a Cross-Sectoral Approach

Further information can be found in our catalyst dialogue



The Catalyst Dialogue discussed several threats, three of which emerged as priorities:

1. **Pandemics and major outbreaks**
2. **Military, hybrid and biological threats**
3. **Climate change and extreme weather events**

These threats interact as a “polycrisis” and reinforce one another. The response must therefore not focus on individual hazards alone.

## What does 'health security' mean?

According to WHO, health security refers to the capabilities, resources and structures that enable societies to protect themselves against – or minimise the impact of – acute threats and emergencies that endanger individual and collective health, safety and socioeconomic stability.

The Dialogue identified three essential prerequisites for health security:

- **Strong public health:** prevention, care, risk assessment, surveillance, early detection and contact tracing, laboratory capacity and response
- **Resilient health services:** managing surges in patients due to a pandemic, epidemic or conflict while maintaining routine health care
- **A healthy and resilient population:** access to prevention and good mental health care, equity and conducive social conditions

## Barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration

- **Siloed sector portfolios:** Disjointed institutional structures discourage cross-sectoral collaboration.
- **Power politics:** Ministries of Health often lack institutional clout in the field of national security, which makes it difficult to initiate joint action across ministries outside of a crisis.
- **Short political horizons:** Once a crisis passes, inter-ministerial cooperation fades; preparedness competes with priorities that yield faster, more visible political returns.

## Why does health security require a cross-sectoral approach?

### Operational and financial necessity

Many capabilities needed to prevent and manage health emergencies sit outside the health sector. Drawing in other sectors also unlocks additional funding to strengthen health security.

### The cost of inaction is high

Investments in preparedness and health security can be politically challenging because their success and the costs avoided often remain invisible. Clear analysis and effective communication are therefore needed to demonstrate the cross-sectoral consequences of both investing in health security and failing to do so.

### International interdependence

No country can achieve health security in isolation, as a threat elsewhere can rapidly become a threat in Germany. National preparedness and international cooperation are therefore mutually reinforcing, not competing agendas.

## Health security is a choice

Germany does not need to choose between health and security, or between national resilience and global health. These agendas can reinforce one another, without allowing either to dominate.

Moreover, Germany does not start from zero: promising collaboration is already underway in several areas, including One Health, pandemic preparedness and civil protection. However, public and global health remain insufficiently integrated into the security field.

**Effectively protecting society against major health threats cannot be left to the Ministry of Health alone, but requires a cross-sectoral approach.**

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