

In Ireland, the Minister of Health and Department of Health (DoH), as the Lead Government Department, are responsible for the management of and response to all major health threats.

Ireland's response to COVID-19 was centrally coordinated. A National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) for COVID-19 was formed in January 2020, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer and comprising more than 30 medical, scientific and health service professionals and experts. The Team was supported by a multidisciplinary Coronavirus Expert Advisory Group and 10 subgroups that focused on areas including epidemiological modelling, vulnerable groups, acute hospital preparedness, medicines and health care workers. The Team also worked closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Crisis Management Team and Crisis Communications Group. A trans-partisan Special Cabinet Committee on COVID-19 chaired by the Taoiseach and supported by government officials from all departments and other agencies was also formed to ensure implementation of a whole-of-government response (from State of Health in the EU - Ireland - Country Health Profile 2021 see https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/2021_chp_ir_english.pdf). The NPHE structure facilitates the sharing of information between the DoH and its agencies providing a forum to steer strategic approaches to public health emergencies in Ireland and to mobilise the necessary health service response.

Ireland's experience during COVID-19 Pandemic

Research including clinical trials

Ireland has a range of research actors and agencies including the Health Research Board (HRB) <https://www.hrb.ie/>, which acts as the leading funder of health and social care research. HRB reports directly to the Minister for Health and works closely with the DoH and HSE to address common goals. Research Ireland (RI) <https://www.researchireland.ie/>, Enterprise Ireland <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/>, Teagasc and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are associated research agencies of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DFAM).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic Ireland swiftly mobilised funding to meet the global demand for research. In March 2020, the Government's main research and innovation agencies developed a coordinated **Rapid Response Research and Innovation programme** to help mitigate and manage the COVID-19 pandemic by unlocking the potential of Irish based researchers and innovators to join the global efforts. The calls are aligned with the WHO R&D Roadmap and informed by the Global Infectious Disease Collaboration for International Disease Preparedness. The first focus area targeted medical countermeasures, health service readiness, and social and policy countermeasures to COVID-19. This was led by the HRB and the Irish Research Council (now part of Research Ireland). The second focus area was an agile and adaptive funding scheme aimed at combining the capabilities of industry and academia in the development of innovative solutions that can have a rapid demonstrable impact on the current COVID-19 crisis in Ireland. This is led by Science Foundation Ireland (now Research Ireland), Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. The purposeful coordination across participating funding agencies helped to ensure that priority areas were advanced, and that duplication or fragmentation is minimised. Over 30 research and innovation projects have been funded through these rapid response calls.

As part of Ireland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with a recommendation in the WHO Roadmap for R&D, the Minister for Health established a temporary, dedicated **National Research Ethics Committee (NREC) for COVID-19** to deliver an expedited process for review for all COVID-19-related research studies. This response by the Department was an important measure to accelerate urgent studies positioned to provide significant evidence for national and global efforts.

Given the absence of proven medications for the treatment of COVID-19, there was an urgent need to **support clinical trials** of candidate interventions. In accordance with the WHO R&D Roadmap, Ireland had an ambition to participate where possible in existing global clinical trials that were appropriate to an Irish setting. HRB funded Clinical Trials Infrastructures

pivoted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have used funding flexibly for COVID-19 and more recently for mpox supported by the HRB.

Some of the key initiatives that Ireland participated in include:

- **REMAP-CAP** was one of a number of trials funded by the European Commission under FP7, as a Work Package in the PREPARE project. The aim of funding PREPARE (and embedded trials) was to build a European infrastructure for rapid clinical research responses in the face of new infectious disease threats. In response to COVID-19, the HRB Clinical Trial Network in Critical Care and participating partners of REMAP-CAP activated the Pandemic Appendix to the Core Protocol so that the platform could respond rapidly in the event of widespread disease resulting from the novel 2019 coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The DoH and HRB actively engaged with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support Ireland's participation in the **WHO Solidarity** Trial for Covid-19 patients in hospital. The global trial involved testing existing drugs already approved for other diseases and known to be largely safe, as well as unapproved drugs that have performed well in animal studies with the other two deadly coronaviruses, which cause severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).
- **EU-Solid Act** trial – Part of the EU RESPONSE research project funded by the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme, EU-SolidaAct was an adaptive platform trial launched in 2021 to evaluate the efficiency of treatments for hospitalised COVID-19 patients.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of pre-existing clinical trials infrastructures, platforms and networks but it also revealed significant gaps in the existing clinical trials infrastructures particularly with regard to the ability to swiftly respond to health emergencies.

Since April 2020, a wealth of COVID-19 data was collected by the HSE in areas including testing, tracing, infectious disease notification and hospitalisation. In 2021, the Minister of Health launched an initiative to facilitate safe and secure access to this data for valid health research purposes. Through a partnership of the DoH, HRB and Central Statistics Office (CSO) a mechanism was established to facilitate the compilation of relevant COVID-19 health data in a format that is controlled, accessible and usable for approved researchers - the **COVID-19 Data Research Hub**. This data-driven research will advance our understanding of COVID-19 for the benefit of people's health and patient care, as well as to inform and shape healthcare policy and planning. [HRB's new role in facilitating access to COVID-19 data for research | HRB | Health Research Board](#)

HRB also maintained a **COVID-19 publication collection** on its open publication platform, HRB Open Research (<https://www.hrbopenresearch.org/collections/coronavirus>).

Systematic reviews

During the pandemic, Evidence Synthesis Ireland (ESI) Cochrane Ireland and the HRB Trials Methodology Research Network (HRB-TMRN) working with the DoH prioritised knowledge gaps urgently needing evidence to support healthcare policy and practice. They collaborated with international evidence networks teams producing and co-ordinating the best available evidence. Their outputs had important impact – informing five WHO guidelines – meaning their work had the potential to save lives on a global scale. In 2021, they supported the evidence requirements of the DoH's Rapid Testing Expert Advisory Group, including commissioning three living evidence syntheses from colleagues in Canada and placing six clinical fellows with international review teams.

Public Health

A memo was brought to the Government on establishing a stand-alone entity to oversee Emergency Preparedness, and a Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group (PHREAG) has been established in 2022 to identify learning from the public health components of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland. Its objective is to strengthen health protection generally and our preparedness for future public health pandemics specifically. The Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group published in September 2023 a report with key lessons and recommendations on Public Health (see <https://assets.gov.ie/268874/7bacbda9-cf87-49c3-a804-3b343235c49c.pdf>).

In October 2024, arising from the report of the PHREAG which assessed Ireland's public health response to COVID-19, the Minister of Health published the report of the Emerging Health Threats Function Expert Steering Group (ESG) <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/report-of-the-emerging-health-threats-function-expert-steering-group.pdf> with recommendations to strengthen Ireland's preparedness for public health crises, ranging from pandemics to the effects of the climate emergency. The recommendations include:

- the establishment of a new Health Security Emergency Response Service to enable rapid delivery of mass testing, contact tracing and vaccination.
- the utilisation of the National Emergency Co-ordination Group (NECG) structure to facilitate a coordinated whole-of-government response to health emergencies
- the establishment of an Irish Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (ISAGE) to support government decision-making
- the establishment of an Interdepartmental Working Group to enhance cross-government collaboration in preparing for future health emergencies

One Health

Antimicrobial resistance remains a serious threat in Ireland. Ireland seeks to incorporate a One Health approach into its pandemic preparedness and response activities.

Planned investments in digital health tools are expected to enable a more thorough investigation of the fluctuations and geographic variation in antibiotic prescription patterns across Ireland (from State of Health in the EU - Ireland - Country Health Profile 2023 see https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-12/2023_chp_ie_english.pdf)

In July 2025, a One Health Oversight Committee was established to provide leadership to the One Health approach across the island of Ireland by facilitating collaboration and co-operation to systematically strengthen capacity and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, both within and beyond the health sector. It is co-chaired by the Chief Medical Officer Professor Mary Horgan, the Chief Veterinary Officer Dr June Fanning and Barry Quinlan, Assistant Secretary General for Climate and Environment. Its membership includes senior leaders from various sectors and includes the National Parks and Wildlife Service; Health Service Executive; Food Safety Authority of Ireland; Safefood, Uisce Éireann, academic representation, Environmental Protection Agency and the Northern Ireland Chief Medical Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer.

Its function is to facilitate collaboration that enhances public health intelligence and improve evidence for decision-making so that Ireland can prevent, predict, prepare for and effectively manage health threats.

In June 2025, the government launched the publication of Ireland's First Gap Analysis Report on Research needs in Relation to Antimicrobial Resistance.

[Gap Analysis of Research needs in relation to Antimicrobial Resistance in an Irish Con.pdf](#) The report, conducted by researchers from Maynooth University and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, provides a comprehensive review of previous and ongoing research in antimicrobial resistance (AMR) across human and animal health in the Republic of Ireland from 2017 to 2023. It also provides an update on research in relation to the environmental dimension of AMR in an Irish context from April 2021 to December 2023.

Ireland's third National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (**iNAP3**) is currently in development, with an estimated publication date of 17 November 2025.

Country has a dedicated strategy for research and innovation related to pandemic threat?No

Although there isn't one dedicated strategy, approaches to research and innovation related to pandemic threat are referenced in the follow reports:

The Report of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group was published in September 2023

The Report of the Emerging Health Threats Function Expert Steering Group (ESG)was published in October 2024

Ireland's Research and Innovation strategy, IMPACT 2030, positions research and innovation at the heart of addressing Ireland's social, economic and environmental challenges, and strengthens support for EU research collaboration. The Irish Department of Health Statement of Research Priorities 2023-2025 includes a specific section on health systems Resilience and Pandemic Preparedness.

Also, the HRB Strategy 2021-2025 includes a strategic objective on 'Productive international partnerships'.

PHREG Report - <https://assets.gov.ie/268874/7bacbda9-cf87-49c3-a804-3b343235c49c.pdf>

EHTF – ESG Report - <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/report-of-the-emerging-health-threats-function-expert-steering-group.pdf>

Impact 2030 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c78-impact-2030-irelands-new-research-and-innovation-strategy/>

DoH Research Priorities: <https://assets.gov.ie/247098/86b01ad5-34b9-466a-934d-489cdd8e86da.pdf>

HRB Strategy - <https://www.hrb.ie/about/strategy-2025/>

Country has an open science portal with information on publicly financed scientific research?No national approach

Country has R&I webpage on COVID-19

Website open science/ open data initiative with respect to pandemic threats, such as COVID-19 open

Name	URL	Short Description
COVID-19 (SFI)	https://www.sfi.ie/covid-19/	SFI Response to the Covid-19 Crisis
COVID-19 Data Research Hub	https://www.hrb.ie/data-collections-evidence/access-covid-19-data-for-research/about/the-covid-19-data-research-	In partnership with the HRB, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Department of Health (DoH), an application process has been established to enable registered researchers apply for access to reuse the COVID-19 data.
Disease data hubs / infectious disease report	https://www.hpsc.ie/notifiablediseases/weeklyidreports/	
HRB Open Research Coronavirus Collection	https://www.hrbopenresearch.org/collections/coronavirus	The Coronavirus Collection provides a venue for rapid dissemination of the latest research related to coronavirus, making the information publicly available so that others can respond effectively.

Country has coordinating structures to link public health needs and research needs?

The Report of the Emerging Health Threats Function was published October 2024 and includes recommendations.

Country has the following research

Clinical trial units, Clinical trial Networks, National Virus Reference Centres,

Name Infrastructure	Type Infrastructure	URL	Available for	Open to
Health Protection Surveillance Centre whole genomic Sequencing (HPSC)	National SARS-CoV-2 Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS)	https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/wholegenomesequencing-surveillanceprogramme/		
Health Research Board-funded infrastructure	Clinical Trials Research Facilities	https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-awarded/clinical-research-infrastructure/	Yes	Yes
Infectious Diseases Network (ID CTNI)	Structured network of researchers, facilities, and infrastructure to improve the quality of clinical trial design in infectious diseases nationally	https://www.ucd.ie/medicine/research/researchcentres/ucd-centreforexperimentalpathogens/hostresearch/idctni/		
National Virus Reference Lab (NVRL)	virology diagnostic service	https://nvrl.ucd.ie/		
UCD Centre for Experimental Pathogen Host Research (CEPHR)	Researchers (clinical, translational, statistical and biomedical) working interactively on aspects of host and pathogen research	https://www.ucd.ie/medicine/research/researchcentres/ucd-centreforexperimentalpathogens/hostresearch/		

Country supporting the participation to the following ESFRI initiatives relevant for infectious diseases
European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network (ECRIN)

Website network of clinical trials (e.g. to facilitate the access to clinical trials) the country is involved in

<https://eu-response.eu/>
<https://ecrin.org/>
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/solidarity-clinical-trial-for-covid-19-treatments>
<https://www.remapcap.org/>
<https://www.edctp.org/>
<https://www.combacte.com/>
<https://vaccelerate.eu/>

Budget mobilisation mechanisms and funding sources

The information is not exhaustive and should be

updated regularly.

Basic Research

url [research.ie](https://www.sfi.ie/research.ie)

<https://www.sfi.ie/>

funding for basic research accessible for industry? SFI works with industry

source of funding Public (research) agencies

Applied Research

url <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/approved-awards/>

<https://www.sfi.ie/>

funding for applied research accessible for industry? SFI works with industry
source of funding Public (research) agencies

Translational Research

url <https://www.hrb.ie>
funding accessible for industry?
source of funding Public (research) agencies

Clinical Research (in general)

url <https://www.hrb.ie>
funding accessible for industry? No
source of funding Public (research) agencies
phase funded?

Clinical Research (in pandemic phase)

url <https://www.hrb.ie>
accessible for industry?
source of funding Public (research) agencies
phase funded ?

Innovation Projects

url <https://www.sfi.ie/>
<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/>
funding for innovation projects accessible industry? Yes
source of funding Public (research) agencies

Flexible funding in case of emergency possible : HRB provided funding and support for COVID-19 and MPOX research; however there is no enduring national mechanism in place for flexible funding across all stakeholders

R&I actors, authorities and activated processes that are activated in case of a health threat

The information is not exhaustive and should be updated regularly.

Name	Description	url
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)	DETE with the help of the agencies IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland funds R&I to companies	https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/who-we-are/department-structure/
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is the lead Department for national R&I policy in Ireland. They fund and create policy for the higher and further education and research sectors. They also oversee the work of the state agencies and public institutions operating in these areas.	https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/
Department of Health	The Department of Health is the lead Department for health policy in Ireland	https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-health/

Government Task Force on Emergency Planning (GTF)	The GTF is the top-level structure, chaired by the Minister for Defence, which gives policy, direction and coordinates and oversees emergency planning activities across all government departments and public authorities.	https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/56c6c-tanaiste-chairs-key-meeting-of-government-task-force-on-emergency-planning/
Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)	The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) is Ireland's specialist service for the surveillance of communicable diseases	https://www.hpsc.ie/
Health Research Board (HRB)	HRB funds translational-applied, clinical, population health and health services research	https://www.hrb.ie/
Health Service Executive (HSE)	Ireland's public health and social care service.	https://www.hse.ie/
Office of Emergency Planning (OEP)	OEP has an oversight function on emergency planning	https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/624e4-emergency-planning/?referrer=https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/ec39cf-office-of-emergency-planning/
Research Ireland (RI)	RI funds oriented basic and applied research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics works jointly with industry	https://www.researchireland.ie/
University College Dublin	UCD Centre for One Health appointed as WHO Collaborating Centre for One Health see https://www.ucd.ie/chas/research/researchthemes/healthresearch/onehealth/	https://www.ucd.ie/chas/

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BE READY is responding to the call: HORIZON-HLTH-2021-DISEASE-04-06 "Building a European partnership for pandemic preparedness" under grant agreement 101057795. Starting date: 01.06.2022. | End Date 31.05.2025

BE READY PLUS is responding to the call: HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-17 "Pandemic preparedness and response: Maintaining and enhancing the preparatory work for a co-funded European partnership for pandemic" under grant agreement 101195079. Starting date: 01.01.2025. | End Date 31.12.2025

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