



fighting heart disease
and stroke
european heart network

Written statement by the European Heart Network (EHN) made at the sixty-sixth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, Copenhagen, 12-15 September 2016, on the *Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)*

August 2016

STATEMENT

*EHN welcomes the WHO Regional Office for Europe's proposed **Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)**.*

EHN supports the Plan's vision, goal, objectives, strategic approach, targets as well as its focus and supporting areas.

EHN notes that the Plan cautions that voluntary agreements are often ineffective and regulation or legislation is often needed.

In particular, EHN welcomes that the Plan:

- highlights that **cardiovascular disease (CVD)** remains the leading cause of premature mortality in the European Region
- requires a focus on **population-based interventions** notably on **tobacco control**; reduction of consumption of **salt, saturated fat and trans fatty acids**; **hypertension control**; as well as, in particular in Eastern European countries, **alcohol control**; as well as **early detection** and **management** of disease
- promotes a focus on a broader set of risk factors and determinants, including **air pollution**
- calls specifically for action to:
 - o adopt strong measures that reduce the overall impact on children and adults of all forms of **marketing** (including online) of foods high in energy, saturated fats, trans fats, free sugars and/or salt, and consider and implement a range of **economic tools** that could discourage the consumption of such foods and improve the affordability and availability of a healthy diet, including, where appropriate **taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages**
 - o mainstream product improvement and reformulation supported by improvement in **interpretative front-of-pack labelling**
 - o develop, extend and evaluate **salt reduction strategies** to continue progress across food product categories and market segments
 - o ensure that **physical activity interventions** take into consideration the specific needs and opportunities of different groups across their lives

- support the regional implementation of World Health Assembly resolution WHA68.8 on health and the environment, addressing the health impact of **air pollution**
- strengthen the capacity of primary health care to prevent, assess and manage cardio-metabolic risk, including clinical guidelines, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and patient-centred approaches
- increase coverage and quality of **cardio-metabolic management** following assessment so that those found to have a total CVD risk above threshold receive drug therapy and counselling (including glycaemic control) to prevent heart attacks and strokes
- improve the quality and coverage of secondary prevention and **rehabilitation following heart attacks and strokes**
- promote **early recognition of the symptoms and signs of a heart attack or stroke** in men and women and timely delivery of care along a critical pathway (the “chain of survival” or “chain of recovery”).

EHN notes that the Plan reports that **trade agreements**, which have been drawn up without adequate consideration of their health impact, risk unravelling hard-won gains. In order to balance trade/economic policy and nutrition/health policy, EHN suggests that, to safe-guard governments’ policy space to protect their citizens effectively not only from tobacco products but also from the harm caused by other products, **global instruments**, like the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, for food and alcohol should be explored.

EHN calls on European Ministers of Health to:

- ***endorse*** the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)
- ***implement*** all its proposed actions effectively
- ***prioritise*** mandatory interventions over voluntary initiatives
- ***introduce*** plain packaging for tobacco products
- ***ensure*** that nutrition and health claims cannot be made on products that do not meet certain nutrient profiles, i.e. are high in fats, salt and sugar.

The European Heart Network (EHN) plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular diseases, in particular heart disease and stroke, through advocacy, networking, capacity-building and patient support, so that they are no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.

EHN is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation independent of political parties and economic interests.

EHN is fully-funded by its members, which are national heart foundations, and receives no funds from any industry.