



fighting heart disease  
and stroke

european heart network

## **EU4Health – an opportunity to tackle the vast burden of cardiovascular disease, the number one cause of death in the EU\***

28 May 2020

Today the European Commission revealed a *brand new self-standing health programme*. In the EU, more than 100 000 people have died from COVID-19, and strains have been put on health care systems. It is in this context that the European Union has realised that health, as in health promotion, disease prevention, treatment and care, is a cornerstone for well-functioning societies and economies.

The European Heart Network (EHN) very much welcomes this acknowledgement and the *EU4Health* programme as well as the budget of Euros 9.4 billion. This is a significant increase compared to the budget previously proposed in the context of the European Social Fund Plus (Euros 413 million).

The EU4Health programme will *reflect the lessons learned from the COVID-19* crisis, and previous health programmes. One lesson that must be learnt is that *prevention* is better than cure. The EU4Health programme recognises the importance of addressing *non-communicable diseases*, as they have shown to be a strong determinant of mortality from COVID-19 – this we also welcome. Data from several European countries demonstrate that *a considerable number of people who die from, or are hospitalised with, COVID-19 are patients with pre-existing cardiovascular disease (CVD)*. European countries will face a backlash of cardiovascular patients who have not received care because of the COVID-19 crisis, and the pandemic also seems to have caused *cardiovascular complications* that need to be addressed.

EHN emphasises that the EU4Health programme must be ambitious with respect to reducing mortality, incidence, and prevalence of cardiovascular disease. Tackling CVD should be a priority in ‘ordinary times’ – prioritising them is even more urgent now. Investing in prevention, early-detection, innovation in diagnosis, treatment, and management of cardiovascular disease will bring significant returns for both people and the economy.

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\*1.8 million people die from cardiovascular disease (heart and circulatory diseases) every year in the EU. CVD accounts for 36% of all deaths in the EU <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190716-1>