



fighting heart disease
and stroke

european heart network

European Heart Network call to Members of the European Parliament not to forget heart and stroke patients in the EU4Health Programme

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In the aftermath of Covid-19, the EU is likely to be confronted with an increase in the burden of cardiovascular disease. During the pandemic, cardiovascular patients had their treatments interrupted or postponed. Patients avoided seeking medical help when they had symptoms related to heart attacks and strokes out of fear of contracting the coronavirus infection; and some patients with COVID-19 developed blood clots, with a notable increase in young people having a stroke.

The EU is now on the cusp of adopting a new health programme – **EU4Health**. It is essential that *the Programme responds to the needs of all people in the EU, including the 60 million people living with cardiovascular disease.*

The newly launched [Fighting cardiovascular disease – a blueprint for EU action](#) offers concrete recommendations on what the EU can do to reduce its alarming burden of cardiovascular disease.

On 6 July, the European Parliament’s ENVI committee will debate the European Commission’s proposal. This proposal has a distinct focus on cancer. It pledges support for a number of actions on cancer, such as access to services and innovative medicines, early detection and diagnosis, continuity of care, quality of life for cancer patients and their carers.

In Europe, chronic diseases are responsible for 77% of the total disease burden (measured in DALYs = disability-adjusted life years). Of these, cardiovascular disease makes up 23% of DALYs, neuropsychiatric conditions 20%, and cancer 11%.

Says Susanne Løgstrup, Director of the European Heart Network (EHN), “*We believe that the Commission’s EU4Health proposal, which commits resources for the next seven years, must benefit all chronic disease patients equitably, including cardiovascular patients.*”

Note:

There are vast disparities in the cardiovascular disease burden in the EU.

The prevalence of cardiovascular disease (CVD) is higher in Eastern and Central European countries and lower in Western, Northern and Southern European countries. Indeed, **CVD prevalence rate in men is 50% higher in Bulgaria** (the EU Member State with the highest rate) **than in Cyprus** (the EU Member State with the lowest rate). **In women the rate is 60% higher in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic** (the EU Member States with the highest rates) **compared to Italy and Spain** (the EU Member States with the lowest rates).

Death rates from both heart disease and stroke are higher in Central and Eastern Europe than in Northern, Southern and Western Europe. **The death rate for heart disease is 13-fold higher in women in Lithuania than in France**, and 9-fold higher in men. **The death rate for stroke is 8-fold higher in men in Bulgaria than in France**, and 7-fold higher in women.

Note to editors:

For more info, please contact

European Heart Network (EHN)

Tel: +32 2 512 91 74

slogstrup@ehnheart.org

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