



fighting heart disease
and stroke

european heart network

European Heart Network comments to the European Commission proposal for a regulation on establishing a Health for Growth programme, the third multi-annual programme of EU action in the field of health for the period 2014-2020

November 2011

The European Heart Network (EHN) welcomes the European Commission's proposal for a third multi-annual programme of EU action in the field of health (health action programme) – *Health for Growth*. EHN expresses concern about the absence of priorities on nutrition and physical activity in the four specific objectives and a too narrow focus on health information systems with comparable data, including only one disease group.

EHN welcomes the inclusion of an objective to address key risk factors. However, EHN regrets that the Commission has not included a specific reference to nutrition and physical activity. Their impact goes well beyond obesity. Notably, they are key risk factors for cardiovascular diseases through direct pathways.

Likewise, EHN welcomes the objective to support European cooperation and networking on preventing and improving the response to chronic diseases. EHN expresses concern that this work may be limited to cancer screening and the setting up of a European cancer information system with comparable data. Such data is crucial for other major chronic diseases as well. EHN notes that a European information system on cardiovascular diseases with comparable data is long overdue. A paper on the need for European comparable data has been submitted to the Commission by the EHN and the European Society of Cardiology earlier this year. We hope that that this preliminary work will find its way into priorities of the health action programme, which will be implemented over the next seven years.

EHN recalls that cardiovascular diseases are the main cause of death in the European Union and the second biggest burden of disease. EHN also recalls that it is estimated that up to 80% of premature death from cardiovascular diseases can be prevented. Action on nutrition and physical activity is an important part of prevention measures, as is, indeed, tobacco use. Early diagnosis of elevated risk of cardiovascular diseases can help stop the development of diseases and prevent avoidable death. Solid comparable data can help improve effectiveness of treatment which again enhances the chance for cardiovascular patients to rejoin the labour force.