



European Heart Network
Fighting heart disease and stroke

Strategic Plan

2023–2030



Europe's Cardiovascular
Health Opportunities:
Leadership for Change

Executive summary

The European Heart Network (EHN) is a Brussels-based alliance of foundations and associations dedicated to preventing cardiovascular diseases (CVD), supporting and representing the interests of patients and the wider public, and promoting cardiovascular health research throughout Europe to drive evidence-based policy.



Charmaine Griffiths,
EHN President

EHN's seven-year strategic plan is a central governance, management, and communications tool and will enable stakeholders to understand and contribute towards EHN's vision, mission and key goals.

EHN's vision is that "every person in Europe can grow up and live in a sustainable environment that promotes cardiovascular health. Premature and preventable deaths due to cardiovascular diseases are reduced by 30% in 2030. State of the art, personalised care and quality of life is accessible and attainable for those born or living with CVD".

EHN's mission is to play a leading role, on behalf of patients and people in Europe, in promoting cardiovascular health and the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular disease, in particular heart disease and stroke, to ensure CVD is no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.

This will be achieved through evidence-based advocacy, research promotion, networking, capacity-building, and representing patients' and the wider public interest.

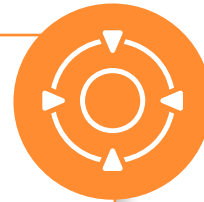


Within the Strategic Plan, EHN has outlined one overarching goal and three fundamental key strategic goals.

The overarching goal is to be a key driver behind concerted action plans on cardiovascular health at pan-European and EU levels, positioning/strengthening EHN, its members and the people they represent to be able to contribute to and benefit optimally from increased European political attention on cardiovascular health.

The three fundamental goals are:

1. To prevent avoidable CVD and achieve best outcomes for existing conditions, overall moving towards cardiovascular health for every person in Europe, though creating an environment in Europe that is conducive to healthy lives for all, regardless of where people are born, their background or means, facilitating early detection of people at high risk of CVD.
2. To strengthen the patients' and public's voice and agency, within EHN and externally, through EHN's membership, enabling on-going involvement of patients living with CVD in shaping policy and advocacy efforts, and their meaningful engagement
3. To improve awareness of and investment in research on societal, biological and environmental determinants impacting cardiovascular health, to explore research on comorbidities impacting CVD and to act as an incubator and accelerator for EHN member research collaboration and shared learning.



In pursuing these goals, particular emphasis will be placed on addressing the health inequities that prevail across Europe and within countries, in terms of public health, access to healthcare and health outcomes, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19, conflict, environmental crisis and austerity.

Important enablers in achieving these goals are cooperation with patient organisations and other stakeholders and digital health transformation/responsible health data sharing.

EHN's guiding principles and values are diversity, equity and inclusion, independence and transparency, ambition, and inclusivity.

The strategy includes a roadmap of broad actions that will take place over the next seven years together with overarching performance indicators. It also outlines the key stakeholders with which EHN will cooperate to fulfil its mission. The strategy foresees external evaluation and a mid-term review to enable realignment with the evolving EU health environment.





The European Heart Network's three fundamental goals

Prevention through healthy environments for all and early detection: reduction in unhealthy food and drinks (production and consumption), smoke-free policies, reduce sedentary lifestyle, identification of people at high CVD risk.



Strengthen patients' voices: patients' involvement and engagement in policy-making and research, through EHN membership.



More and better cardiovascular research.



Strategic goals for the seven-year plan (2023–2030)

EHN has one overarching goal and three fundamental key strategic goals. The overarching goal is:

Leadership For Change

To be a key driver behind concerted action plans on cardiovascular health at pan-European and EU levels. Positioning/strengthening EHN, its members and the people they represent to be able to contribute to and benefit optimally from increased European political attention on cardiovascular health.



The three fundamental goals are:

1. Prevention

To prevent avoidable CVD and achieve best outcomes for existing conditions, overall move towards cardiovascular health for every person in Europe. Creating an environment in Europe that is conducive to healthy lives for all, regardless of where people are born, their background or means, facilitating early detection of people at high risk of CVD.

2. A Strong Patient and People's Voice

To strengthen the patients' and public's voice and agency, within EHN and externally. Through EHN's membership, enabling on-going involvement of patients living with CVD in shaping policy and advocacy efforts, and their meaningful engagement, i.e. co-creation in CVD related research, ensuring that current and future practices meet patient needs and goals.

3. Research

To improve awareness of and investment in research on societal and environmental determinants impacting cardiovascular health. To promote and foster policies leading to more research on biological determinants impacting CVD.

To explore research on comorbidities impacting CVD, reflecting the current policy discourse at EU level and in particular the “Healthier Together” NCD Initiative by the European Commission. Special focus will be on underserved populations including women, children, and older people, and decreasing inequalities in and between countries.

To act as an incubator and accelerator for EHN member research collaboration and shared learning.

In pursuing these four goals, particular emphasis will be placed on addressing the health inequities that prevail across Europe, and within countries, in terms of public health, access to health, and health outcomes, which have been exacerbated by environment crisis, COVID-19, conflict and austerity.

Important enablers in achieving these goals are:

- co-operation with patient organisations and other stakeholders.
- digital health transformation: ensuring the implementation of EHN's work to date on digital health and digital health literacy for patients and health care professionals and the responsible use of health data in research and decision-making in cardiovascular health.

Please refer to the section below on the roadmap for more details on each of the goals, actions and enablers.

Guiding principles and values

EHN is a value-driven organisation. The following principles and values underpin its work and approach.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

EHN promotes a diverse, equitable, non-violent, gender balanced, non-discriminatory society. This is reflected in the way that it works and all that it strives to achieve on behalf of Europe's patients and people.

Independence and transparency

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

EHN's positions and policy recommendations are based on thorough research, facts, and best evidence. EHN strongly defends its positions, opposing interests, views and policies that have the potential to impact negatively on achieving its vision.

EHN is open and works in full transparency in its governance, financial affairs and reporting.

Ambition

EHN is ambitious, striving to create an environment throughout Europe in which the healthier choice becomes the default choice for all and which offers the best possible care and support for all patients throughout their lives.

Inclusiveness

EHN welcomes all national organisations which fulfil the membership criteria set out in its statutes. EHN reaches out to organisations which have similar aims and objectives and offers to share its knowledge and expertise in a collaborative, mutually rewarding manner.

Key stakeholders, partners, and allies

Over the years, EHN has undertaken several stakeholder analyses as the organisation evolved. Over and above its primary target groups – policy and decision makers and EHN members – EHN has identified a wider range of stakeholders and allies that can support the organisation in fulfilling its mission. These include the World Health Organization (WHO), in particular its European regional office; public health organisations; patient organisations; chronic disease groups; disease-specific organisations; risk-factor focused organisations; medical/scientific organisations and consumer organisations.

These stakeholders have been identified because of the potential for collaborative work and synergies to support common objectives, most notably by influencing EU policy and decision makers.

A further stakeholder group comprises media and journalists. They are an important conduit for messages to policy and decision makers and thus help to influence them.

EHN will engage in dialogue with representatives of the health, physical, sports and nutrition industry but will maintain its independence and integrity, in line with its core values as an organisation. Under no circumstances will it work with the tobacco or alcohol industry.

Specific stakeholders

On general health policy, broader risk factors, and evidence provision

- European Institutions (Commission, European Parliament, largely through the MEP Heart Group, and Council, in particular in the framework of the EU Council Presidencies, Permanent representations of the EU).
- WHO Regional Office for Europe.
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).
- European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA).
- The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC).

On CVD specific topics and campaign work around the European Plan on Cardiovascular Health

- European Society of Cardiology (ESC).
- World Heart Federation (WHF).
- European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health (EACH).

European and national organisations which work on priority issues/ risk factors – smoke free environments, food and nutrition and physical activity

- Smoke Free Partnership.
- Food Policy Coalition.

Evaluation, broad indicators, review, and realignment

EHN is a learning organisation, and as such is committed to both the process and outcome evaluation of this Strategic Plan, in line with the broad indicators outlined in the roadmap. Reducing premature and preventable deaths due to CVD by 30% in 2030, as outlined in the WHO Sustainable Development Goals remains the huge ambition of EHN and its membership. This is part of EHN's vision and is an aspiration shared by many sister organisations in the field of cardiovascular health. The EHN membership remains committed to doing all it can, individually and collectively, towards achieving this ambition.

Working towards the adoption of a Cardiovascular Health Plan and Cardiovascular Health Mission at EU level will be an important goal for EHN in the years to come. The implications of success here are significant and would require the EHN board to revisit this strategic plan to harness fully the funding and political opportunities around this for the organisation and its membership. It also implies focusing efforts, during the first year of the Strategic Plan (2024) building on achievements to date, to ensure sufficient political pressure for the EU Institutions to adopt a plan.

Although achieving this ambitious goal is not dependent solely on the role of EHN, the organisation will play a leading role. If this is not achieved because of political constraints, another important indicator is the continued and measurable increase of investment at EU level in NCDs including cardiovascular health in the next EU mandate.

This work is led by the board, CEO, and the senior team. Annual operational work plans will include an evaluation framework for specific activities that will help to feed this with additional qualitative and quantitative data.

The board will analyse thoroughly the potential implications for EHN of the adoption of a European Cardiovascular Health Plan in the next European Commission Mandate and adjust this plan accordingly (early 2025).

A mid-term review of the EHN Strategic Plan will take place in 2027, to realign in line with the wider environment. An external evaluator will oversee this process.

Acknowledgements

EHN would like to thank sincerely its membership, who participated actively in the co-creation of this Strategic Plan. Warm thanks also go to EHN board members for their direction and constructive suggestions and the secretariat, in particular Birgit Beger and Marleen Kestens for their key roles in overseeing the strategic planning process during 2022 and 2023.



Annex: Current governance structure

Please find below documents relevant to the Governance of the European Heart Network (EHN):

- [EHN Statutes](#)
- [Internal rules for the EHN](#)
- [EHN Board and EHN Director](#)
- [Duties and responsibilities of the Board and Members of the EHN](#)
- [The role of the President of the EHN](#)
- [The role of the Vice President of the EHN](#)
- [The role of the Treasurer of the EHN](#)
- [EHN guidelines on industry-sponsored events](#)

Annual accounts

- [EHN Audited Accounts 2022](#)
- [EHN Audited Accounts 2021](#)
- [EHN Audited Accounts 2020](#)
- [EHN Audited Accounts 2019](#)
- [EHN Audited Accounts 2018](#)

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

EHN is funded by its members and receives no funding from any industry.

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