

EHN'S PRIORITIES FOR AN EU CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH PLAN



European Heart Network
Fighting heart disease and stroke

The Burden of Cardiovascular Disease in Europe



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Leading cause of death
→ **1 in 3 EU deaths, many premature.**



Disproportionate impact on
vulnerable & marginalized groups.



60+ million
Europeans live with
CVD.



Economic cost
€282 billion per year.

80% of premature CVD deaths are preventable.

The EU's Role in Fighting CVD:

While healthcare is managed by Member States, the EU can drive change through

1. **Public Health Interventions**
2. **Research & Innovation**
3. **Cross-border Coordination**

EHN calls on EU institutions to adopt a **comprehensive European Cardiovascular Health** plan built on **three pillars**:

Prioritise Prevention

– Keep People Healthy

Preventing CVD through public health interventions can save lives and reduce the burden on healthcare. **The EU must act with comprehensive measures to reduce risk factors and strengthen disease prevention.**

Empower Patients –

Improve Lives, Not Just Outcomes

CVD patients deserve holistic care, rehabilitation, and protection from discrimination. **The EU should ensure inclusive rehabilitation, patient involvement in policy development, and legal safeguards against bias.**

Strengthen Research & Innovation

– Close the Gaps

Advancing CVD research is key to better prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care. **The EU must boost funding, address gaps in underrepresented groups, and fast-track innovative therapies.**



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Prioritise Prevention – Keep People Healthy through public health interventions

Effective, equitable prevention can save millions of lives and reduce long-term costs.

Key **EU-level actions** should include:

- Improving **access to affordable, healthy, plant-based diets**
- Allow people to grow up and live in **smoke-free environments** by including all tobacco products, nicotine products, and vapes while revising EU tobacco legislation
- Develop policies that **reduce alcohol consumption** in the EU
- **Strengthen air pollution legislation** in the EU
- **Promote physical activity** in urban and local areas
- **Ensure early risk detection** through systematic screening for hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, and atrial fibrillation in primary care

Empower Patients – Improve Lives, Not Just Outcomes

Living with CVD should not mean living with stigma or reduced quality of life.

We urge EU and Member States to:

- Ensure **meaningful patient involvement in health policy**, system design, and research.
- Expand access to comprehensive, **inclusive rehabilitation**, with **specific support for young patients**, including mental health, education, and career guidance.
- Protect individuals with CVD from **discrimination in employment and insurance policies**, enshrining equal treatment as a legal and social norm.

Strengthen Research & Innovation – Close the Gaps

Modern, well-funded research is essential to fight CVD and tackle inequalities in care.

The EU should:

- **Increase investment in CVD research** with a focus on prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Address persistent gaps by prioritising **underrepresented populations**, particularly **women, children, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups**.
- Support research into **sex-specific symptoms**, hormonal impacts, and paediatric CVD.
- Promote **innovation-friendly regulations** to accelerate access to lifesaving diagnostics and therapies.

Health Equity - A Horizontal Priority

Every pillar above **must address health inequalities**. CVD disproportionately affects those in lower socioeconomic groups, and any EU-level strategy must aim to reduce disparities in exposure, access, and outcomes across the Union.

TIME TO ACT.

EHN calls on **EU policymakers to deliver a truly all-encompassing European Cardiovascular Health Plan**, building on existing tools and aligned with EU competences in public health, internal market, environment, research, and social policy. The time for fragmented action is over.

The time for a unified, strategic EU response is now.
