



European Heart Network
Fighting heart disease and stroke

Annual Report 2025



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Who we are

European Heart Network

The European Heart Network (EHN) is a Brussels-based alliance of foundations and associations dedicated to preventing cardiovascular diseases (CVD), representing patient interests and funding research throughout Europe.

EHN Pillars



Prevention

Promote healthy environments for all, prevent avoidable cardiovascular disease, and strengthen early detection of people at high risk of CVD.



Patients

Strengthen patients' and the public's voice and involvement in shaping cardiovascular policy, advocacy, and research.



Research

Increase awareness of and investment in cardiovascular health research, while fostering collaboration and shared learning across the EHN network.

OUR MISSION

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.

OUR VISION

Every person in Europe can grow up and live in a sustainable environment that promotes cardiovascular health, with premature and preventable deaths due to cardiovascular diseases reduced by **30% by 2030**.

Reflecting on 2025: Opening Words

The case for Europe to act together in support of cardiovascular health has never been clearer than it is right now.

In a period of global volatility and conflict, the European Heart Network remains steadfast in our shared determination to save lives and improve cardiovascular health. Our strength comes from our unity: we are more powerful together than we could ever be alone.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the leading cause of death and disability in Europe, taking around 10,000 lives every day. Yet much of this burden is preventable—and there is far more we can do, and must do, to change the trajectory.

I am proud of EHN's contribution to securing the EU Safe Hearts Plan, and confident in our ability to support its implementation. The Plan provides a vital foundation for collaboration, but its true measure of success will be whether it delivers for every community in Europe and reduces inequalities. This is especially urgent as gaps in prevention, diagnosis and care widen in too many places. In a diverse and complex European landscape, EHN brings together national heart foundations and patient organisations to share evidence, learning and lived experience in pursuit of a common goal: better heart health for everyone in Europe.

That collective strength has been especially visible in our work to help members learn from one another as new technologies, data and artificial intelligence reshape prevention,



Charmaine Griffiths
President, EHN

research and care. By fostering practical collaboration across countries and contexts, EHN continues to show what is possible when Europe works together with purpose and trust.

As I come to the end of my term as President, I want to pay tribute to our members, Birgit and the EHN team, and our many supporters and partners. Since 1992, EHN has helped pave the way for impactful European policy measures to improve cardiovascular health while championing the needs of millions of patients.

It is a privilege to stand alongside so many dedicated people who bring passion, expertise and determination to the fight for better heart health. As I pass the Presidency to Hans Snijder, I leave this role with deep gratitude for our community and no doubt about the urgency of what must come next as EHN presses for implementation of the Safe Hearts Plan across Europe. The time for commitment has passed; now we must deliver progress for patients.

Dr Charmaine Griffiths
EHN President

2025 was a landmark year for cardiovascular health in Europe.

The publication of the Safe Hearts Plan in December was a historic milestone for the Cardiovascular Health Community and the result of sustained advocacy, evidence, patient engagement and coalition-building. For EHN, it marked a new phase: turning political recognition into tangible improvement for people living with cardiovascular disease.

The EHN position paper, developed by the EHN Cardiovascular Health Plan Working Group, helped translate this momentum into priorities for implementation.

National governments are showing growing interest in working with national heart foundations and patient organisations, recognising their expertise and credibility.

Implementation will require dedicated funding. As the EU prepares its next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028–2034, EHN will continue to call for cardiovascular health, especially CVD prevention, to be properly reflected in the EU budget.

The EHN Annual Workshop in Stockholm demonstrated the importance of shared learning, solidarity and practical cooperation across our European network.

The workshop saw the launch of the EHN AI Community of Practice, developed with support from the British Heart Foundation. This initiative provides members with a space to exchange knowledge and explore the responsible use of AI in cardiovascular health and organisational practice.

Our cooperation with WHO Europe remains essential, particularly on prevention policies



Birgit Beger
CEO, EHN

beyond the European Union. Cardiovascular disease does not stop at EU borders, and WHO Europe is a strong ally in keeping cardiovascular health high on the wider regional agenda.

Research has gained growing relevance in European and global programmes. EHN will continue to advocate for stronger cardiovascular research, including prevention research, patient-centred innovation, digital health, sex and gender differences, and equitable access to science.

I would like to thank Charmaine Griffiths, President of the European Heart Network, for her leadership and commitment, and the Executive Committee — Robert Keller, Vice-President, and Kristina Sparreljung, Treasurer — for their guidance and stewardship.

My thanks also go to the EHN Board and members, who contributed extra grants to the EHN budget in 2025, strengthening our network's capacity. I also thank the EHN office team for their service to members.

Birgit Beger
EHN CEO

2025 at a Glance



April 2025

European Parliament MEP Group on Cardiovascular Health launched



April 2025

EACH launches *A European Cardiovascular Health Plan: The Roadmap*



May 2025

The European Heart Network (EHN) launches the *From Failure to Future* campaign to mark Heart Failure Awareness Week.
EHN publishes the *Patient Advocacy Handbook – Volume I*



June 2025

EHN publishes a new position paper on the impact of alcohol consumption on cardiovascular disease.



September 2025

EHN Vice-President Martin Vestweber and CEO Birgit Beger meet with EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi



October 2025

EHN launches *EHN Young Hearts*



November 2025

EHN organises the FILTERED Conference and launches the *European Declaration on Reducing Harm from Tobacco, Nicotine, Alcohol and Unhealthy Food*.



December 2025

EHN publishes its vision for a European Cardiovascular Health Plan.



December 2025

The EACH Cardiovascular Health Summit takes place.



December 2025

The European Commission adopts the EU Safe Hearts Plan.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are largely preventable, and reducing their burden requires a strong, coordinated policy approach at EU level. EHN advocates for creating environments that make healthy choices accessible and affordable for all, recognising that prevention must be addressed across the life course and embedded in all relevant policies.

This includes strengthening action on key risk factors such as unhealthy diets, tobacco and nicotine use, harmful alcohol consumption, air pollution, and physical inactivity. EHN also emphasises the importance of early detection and risk assessment, alongside measures that address the broader social and commercial determinants of health, to reduce inequalities and support long-term population health.

Alcohol and Cardiovascular Disease: Driving Evidence-Based Prevention

EHN position paper on the impact of alcohol consumption on cardiovascular disease

In June 2025, EHN published its position paper on the impact of alcohol consumption on cardiovascular disease, providing a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of alcohol as a major risk factor for cardiovascular health. The paper delivers a clear and decisive message: there is no safe or protective level of alcohol consumption for cardiovascular health. Challenging long-standing misconceptions around alcohol and heart health, the publication marks an important milestone in EHN's prevention and advocacy work on alcohol-related cardiovascular harm.



Drawing on the latest scientific evidence, the paper highlights the significant contribution of alcohol to the cardiovascular disease burden in Europe and calls for stronger, population-level prevention policies. Key

recommendations include improved labelling and health warnings, increased taxation, restrictions on marketing, particularly to young people, and measures to reduce overall consumption.

Alcohol & CVD Pledge

To support dissemination and advocacy, EHN members first endorsed a collective pledge during the EHN Annual Workshop in June 2025, reaffirming the shared commitment that alcohol consumption has no protective effect on cardiovascular health and to communicate this message across Europe.

Building on this momentum, EHN launched the Alcohol & CVD Pledge publicly for World Heart Day 2025, inviting policymakers, stakeholders, and the wider public to join the call for evidence-based action to reduce alcohol consumption, as it is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.



EU-funded Prevention Projects

In 2025, EHN was actively involved in two EU-funded projects under the EU4Health financial framework, focusing on both primary and secondary prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

FILTERED Project: From Silos to Synergies in NCD Prevention

The FILTERED project (From Silos to Synergies to Prevent NCDs) aimed to strengthen collaboration among civil society organisations working on the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with a particular focus on key risk factors including tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy diets. By promoting a more integrated and coordinated approach, the project supported stronger advocacy and more effective policy action at both EU and national levels.



Filtered

FROM SILOS TO SYNERGIES
TO PREVENT NCDs

Key FILTERED Activities and Events:

FILTERED Conference 2025

In November 2025, EHN organised the final conference of the FILTERED project in Brussels, bringing together policymakers, including Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, and Wobke Hoekstra, European Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth and also responsible for Taxation, alongside civil society organisations, and public health experts to advance a more coherent European approach to promoting public health preventing non-communicable diseases. Held under the theme “Prevention over Profit: Breaking the Silos to Put Health First”, the conference provided a platform to reflect on lessons learned and to strengthen collaboration across sectors.

Discussions focused on the need to address the commercial determinants of health, strengthen public health policies on tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food, and ensure that health promotion and disease prevention is prioritised within the EU policy agenda. The conference also highlighted the importance of coordinated advocacy and cross-sector collaboration to tackle shared risk factors more effectively.

FILTERED Final Conference, Brussels, November 2025. Mustafa Hushyar, Youth Advisory Group Member, JA PreventNCD (left), and Dr Monique de Boer, Coordinator of the Alcohol Prevention Healthy Generation Programme (right).



European Declaration on NCD Risk Factors

The Final FILTERED conference marked the launch of the [*European Declaration on Reducing Harm from Tobacco, Nicotine, Alcohol and Unhealthy Food*](#), endorsed by EHN and partner organisations. The declaration calls for stronger EU action to reduce exposure to key risk factors, protect public health policymaking from industry interference, and reinforce the role of civil society in advancing prevention.

It sets out a clear roadmap for population- level measures, including fiscal policies, marketing restrictions, and improved consumer information, alongside a strong call to safeguard public health from vested interests and to strengthen collaborative advocacy across Europe.

JACARDI (Joint Action on Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes)

JACARDI is an EU initiative supporting 21 European countries in addressing the burden of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes through coordinated action and policy development.

EHN continued its active engagement in JACARDI – the Joint Action on Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes, contributing through its representation on the Strategic Advisory Board, with EHN Board member Paola Santalucia and the EHN CEO Birgit Beger bringing the perspective of heart foundations, patient organisations, prevention policy and public health advocacy.

A key moment in 2025 was the European Public Health Conference in Helsinki in November, where JACARDI invited EHN, together with the European Society of Cardiology, to contribute to a workshop on “Towards a European Cardiovascular Health Plan: from evidence to policy for prevention and management.” The event helped further shape the link between JACARDI’s practical work on prevention, early detection, equity and implementation, and the emerging EU Safe Hearts Plan, underlining the role of Joint Actions in turning European policy ambition into national implementation.

Several EHN member organisations participate in JACARDI, including:

- Italy – The Italian Association for Cardiovascular Prevention (SPELS)
- Spain – The Spanish Heart Foundation
- Finland – The Finnish Heart Association



EHN Advocacy work on Food and Nutrition

Unhealthy diets remain one of the leading contributors to cardiovascular disease and premature mortality across Europe. In response, EHN continues to prioritise advocacy on food and nutrition policies as a central pillar of cardiovascular disease prevention. This includes promoting healthier and more sustainable dietary patterns, improving consumer information through front-of-pack nutrition labelling, reducing the marketing and accessibility of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), supporting food reformulation, and advocating for policy measures that make healthier food choices more affordable and accessible.

Throughout 2025, EHN advanced this work both independently and through collaboration with broader public health and civil society alliances.

In March 2025, EHN participated in a [European Parliament event highlighting the critical role of nutrition in preventing cardiovascular disease](#), underlining the importance of stronger EU action to support healthier food environments and reduce diet-related health inequalities.

EHN also continued its leadership role within

the EU Food Policy Coalition, co-chairing the Task Force on Sustainable and Healthy Food Environments. As part of this work, EHN joined other expert organisations in an [open letter to the European Commissioner for Health](#), calling for healthy and affordable diets to be fully integrated into the future EU Cardiovascular Health Plan.

In addition, EHN took a clear position on the [European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), expressing concern that the strategy failed to sufficiently recognise the health and sustainability benefits of more plant-based diets. EHN stressed that this represented a missed opportunity to support both public health and environmental objectives through food policy.

Further reinforcing this position, EHN joined a [coalition of more than 130 organisations calling for the development of an EU Action Plan for Plant-based Foods](#), advocating for a more coherent European approach to sustainable and health-promoting food systems.

From left to right: Dr Milka Sokolović (EPHA); MEP Biljana Borzan (Croatia, S&D); Dr Wendy Walrabenstein (PAN International); and Marleen Kestens (EHN), at an event on sustainable and healthy diets, European Parliament, Brussels, February 2026.



EHN Advocacy on Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Policies

While unhealthy diets remain the leading contributors to cardiovascular disease (CVD) at population level, tobacco use continues to represent one of the most significant individual risk factors for cardiovascular disease. EHN therefore continues to prioritise tobacco control and smoke-free policies as a core area of its prevention advocacy work.

Throughout 2025, EHN worked closely with public health partners, particularly through its membership in the Smoke Free Partnership, to support the development of stronger European tobacco control policies aimed at achieving a smoke-free generation. A major focus of this work included addressing emerging nicotine and tobacco products such as e- cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine pouches, as well as strengthening legislation in response to new forms of tobacco and nicotine marketing, including influencer promotion and digital advertising techniques.

At EU level, EHN actively contributed to ongoing discussions surrounding the revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive, the Tobacco Products Directive, and the Tobacco Advertising Directive. EHN advocated for stronger taxation measures on tobacco and nicotine products, alignment of taxation between conventional tobacco and newer nicotine products, tighter advertising restrictions, and stronger protections against industry interference and misleading harm-reduction narratives.

EHN also continued its broader collaboration with WHO Europe and other public health organisations on the commercial

determinants of health and their impact on tobacco consumption and cardiovascular disease.

Key outputs of EHN's advocacy work in this area throughout 2025 include:

- EHN participated in a World No Tobacco Day event jointly organised by WHO Europe, the Smoke Free Partnership, the European Respiratory Society, and the European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention, highlighting the need to ban tobacco and nicotine advertising in all forms, including online platforms and spaces frequented by young people.
- EHN welcomed the [European Commission's proposal to revise the Tobacco Taxation Directive](#) and submitted a [formal response to the public consultation](#) on updated excise duties for manufactured tobacco products.
- EHN, as a member of the Smoke Free Partnership and alongside more than 120 organisations, supported EU Health Ministers' [urgent call to revise the EU Tobacco Directives](#).
- EHN, as part of the wider European health community, joined [calls urging EU Finance Ministers to support a strong Tobacco Taxation Directive](#).
- EHN also contributed, through its membership in the European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA), to a [joint statement on tobacco taxation discussions at EU level](#).

EHN Advocacy Work on Physical Activity

In 2025, Birgit Beger, CEO of the European Heart Network (EHN), featured in *EuropeActive Highlights Magazine*, underlining the essential role of physical activity in maintaining population health and reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. The article also highlighted the importance of ensuring access to adequate and adapted cardiac rehabilitation services to support recovery and long-term cardiovascular health outcomes.

EU AFFAIRS



**Editorial by Birgit Beger,
CEO of the European Heart Network**

Healthier Hearts and Healthier Lives

In December 2024, I had the privilege of presenting the European Heart Network's (EHN) mission and perspective on the vital connection between physical activity, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and health at EuropeActive's annual **#BEACTIVE DAY** conference. This invitation was an opportunity to highlight the critical role of physical activity in addressing one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time: cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

As a Brussels-based alliance of over 30 foundations and associations, the EHN is dedicated to preventing CVD, advocating for patient interests, and funding research across Europe. Our mission is clear: to lead the charge in promoting cardiovascular health and reducing the burden of CVD, and to ensure CVD is no longer a leading cause of premature death and disability in Europe.

Today, CVD remains the EU's biggest killer – affecting 60 million people and accounting for 5 million new diagnoses annually. Addressing this immense challenge requires a coordinated policy plan that promotes cardiovascular health and alleviates disease burden across the EU. Central to this effort is the adoption of healthy lifestyles, with regular physical activity playing a pivotal role.

The Power of Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is one of the most effective tools for enhancing cardiovascular health and improving quality of life. Its benefits extend beyond CVD prevention to positively impact multiple modifiable risk factors. For instance, physical activity:

- Lowers high blood pressure, reducing the risk of disease progression and improving quality of life for people with hypertension,
- Helps maintain a healthy weight and plays a key role in the primary prevention of Type 2 diabetes,
- Is protective against incident site-specific cancers (breast, colon, bladder and others),
- In high levels, could decrease the risk of multimorbidity, particularly cardiometabolic multimorbidity,
- And offers a 20-30% reduced risk of all-cause premature death to adults meeting physical activity guidelines.

In short, physical activity is a cornerstone of both NCD prevention and management, including CVD.



Key insights from EHN's Report
EHN's report on Physical Activity Policies for Cardiovascular Health highlights three key messages:

1. **Move More, Live Better:** Daily activities like walking or cycling support cardiovascular health – it's never too late to start.
2. **Prevention Matters:** Creating active societies requires systemic change, such as walkable cities and physical education in schools.
3. **Rehabilitation is Crucial:** Accessible pathways for stroke survivors and cardiac patients are essential, with inclusive programmes for all.

The Case for Cross-Sector Collaboration

A healthier future requires collective action, and collaboration between national associations within the CVD and physical activity communities is critical. Such partnerships are essential to improving the prevention and management of NCDs, including CVD, while also enhancing health outcomes and quality of life for all EU citizens.

By working together, our associations can leverage their unique strengths and expertise to build more effective programmes and policies that promote physical activity as the bedrock of cardiovascular health. Collaboration can drive the creation of healthy environments, from accessible urban spaces to inclusive rehabilitation pathways, ensuring that people across all demographics can lead healthier lives. Strengthened partnerships also have the potential to foster a culture of active living, benefiting individuals and society alike, and ultimately turning the tide on CVD's impact across Europe.

At EHN, we remain committed to championing these efforts and invite all stakeholders to unite efforts and resources to promote physical activity for healthier hearts and healthier lives. Together, we can reverse the course of cardiovascular disease and pave the way for a brighter, healthier future for all Europeans.



Empowering Patients

EHN advocates for a strong, people-centred approach to cardiovascular health, grounded in the conviction that meaningful progress in awareness, prevention, and outcomes can only be achieved by systematically integrating patient experience into policy, research, and care delivery. Increasingly, EHN emphasises that real-world patient perspectives are essential not only to identifying gaps in care, but also to shaping cardiovascular policies and solutions that genuinely respond to people's needs and lived experiences.

To this end, EHN focuses on understanding challenges across the full patient pathway: from timely and accurate diagnosis to equitable access to treatment and effective social and physical rehabilitation. Particular attention is given to persistent inequalities, including those linked to gender, age, socioeconomic status, and geography, which continue to influence outcomes for people living with cardiovascular disease. EHN also advocates for stronger cardiovascular health policies that address these disparities and ensure equitable, patient-centred care across Europe.

EHN works to ensure that patients are not only consulted but recognised as active partners in decision-making processes. This includes its continued engagement in public health policies where patients are concerned, regulatory and research environments, such as the European Medicines Agency's Patients' and Consumers' Working Party (PCWP), as well as its participation in EU-funded research projects, where patient perspectives are integrated throughout the innovation cycle.

Beyond its own initiatives, EHN actively contributes to EU and EMA public consultations. In 2025, it advocated for stronger integration of patient experience data in research and regulatory decision-making, alongside improved access to medical devices for cardiovascular patients, reinforcing the need for cardiovascular policies that are informed by real-world evidence, responsive to unmet needs, and supportive of better outcomes and quality of life for patients across Europe.

EHN Secretariat and patient advocates at the European Parliament, Brussels, April 2025.



EHN Young Hearts: Bringing Young Patient Voices to the Forefront

In 2025, EHN established the [EHN Young Hearts](#) in response to a clear gap: the absence of a comprehensive, Europe-wide platform representing the cardiovascular health needs and voices of young people. This initiative was also driven by concerning trends, including the increasing incidence of heart attacks and strokes among younger populations.

The group was established to better understand the specific challenges faced by young people living with cardiovascular disease, and to identify how these differ from those experienced by older populations. It provides a structured platform for young patients to share their lived experiences and highlight gaps across the care continuum: from education and employment to mental health and the transition from paediatric to adult care.

Building on these insights, the Task Force aimed to translate lived experience into action by identifying concrete, age-responsive solutions. Its ultimate objective was to develop a set of policy recommendations that could serve as a practical resource for decision-makers, ensuring that cardiovascular health strategies reflect the needs of young people and adopt a truly life-course approach.

EHN Patient Advocacy Handbook: Empowering Patients Across Europe

In May 2025, EHN published the first edition of its Patient Advocacy Handbook, part of a series of similar resources designed to strengthen patient engagement in cardiovascular policy across Europe. The initiative reflects EHN's strong belief that patients must be actively involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives, and forms part of its broader efforts to support member organisations in building advocacy capacity.

This first edition is directed specifically at people living with cardiovascular disease (CVD), highlighting the value of their lived experiences and how these can be leveraged to drive meaningful change. It aims to support patients in transforming personal testimonies into effective advocacy tools, helping them engage more confidently with policymakers and other stakeholders. Its ultimate goal is to enable them to play an active role in shaping prevention, care, and policy.



From Failure to Future Campaign: Amplifying Patient Voices in EU Policy

In May 2025, EHN launched the [From Failure to Future campaign](#) to mark Heart Failure Awareness Week, bringing together patient advocates and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to call for stronger, more patient-centred cardiovascular health policies across Europe.

Through a video series featuring people living with heart failure from across Europe alongside policymakers, the campaign highlighted key priorities including prevention, early diagnosis, access to

treatment and rehabilitation, mental health support, and reducing inequalities in care. It reinforced the need for a comprehensive European Cardiovascular Health Plan built with patients, not just for them.

By fostering direct dialogue between patients and decision-makers, the campaign strengthened the visibility of lived experience in EU policymaking and reaffirmed EHN's commitment to placing patient voices at the heart of cardiovascular health policy.

World Patient Safety Day: Embedding Patient Perspectives in Safer Care

In September 2025, EHN marked World Patient Safety Day by highlighting the importance of patient engagement in improving safety and quality of care. Through an [interview](#) with EHN Patients and Research Manager Mehitabel Holler, EHN emphasised the critical role of patient experience in shaping safer, more responsive healthcare systems.

Drawing on both personal and professional perspectives, the discussion underscored the need for timely and accurate diagnosis, clear communication, and the meaningful involvement of patients as active partners in their care. It also highlighted persistent gaps in recognising and addressing the needs of younger patients living with cardiovascular disease.

EHN Patients and Research Manager and patient advocate Mehitabel Holler during an interview for World Patient Safety Day 2025.

Strengthening Research and Innovation

EHN engages actively in European research and regulatory processes, ensuring that patient perspectives are reflected in decision-making. As a member of the European Medicines Agency's (EMA) Patients' and Consumers' Working Party (PCWP), EHN contributes to discussions aimed at placing patients at the centre of regulatory developments.

In November 2025, EHN further contributed to these efforts by participating in the EMA/HMA Artificial Intelligence Workshop in Amsterdam. Representing the patient perspective, EHN emphasised the importance of meaningful patient involvement in the development and use of artificial intelligence in healthcare. Particular attention was given to areas such as the use of AI to enhance patient safety, strengthening AI literacy across stakeholders, and expanding access to real-world data sources, including patient-recorded data.

EHN also stressed the importance of ensuring that artificial intelligence strengthens, rather than replaces, meaningful human interaction in healthcare, while supporting safer, more efficient, and patient-centred care pathways.

EHN's contribution to regulatory discussions



Christine Dehn (German Heart Foundation) and Mehitabel Holler (European Heart Network) at the European Medicines Agency (EMA), Amsterdam, April 2025.

was also reflected in the European Medicines Agency's [Big Data Highlights newsletter](#) (January 2025), where its representative highlighted the importance of leveraging raw data to strengthen clinical evidence, particularly for underserved patient groups. This further underscores EHN's commitment to advancing patient-centred, data-driven approaches in medicines regulation.

EHN Research Platform

The EHN Research Platform remains an active and engaged body, contributing expertise to the organisation's research-related activities. Its members are consulted on an ad hoc basis whenever their input is required, ensuring that EHN's contributions are grounded in the national experiences of its members who are actively involved in research.

In addition, the group is regularly informed about research opportunities and key developments at the European level, enabling members to stay up to date and engage where relevant. Through this continuous exchange, the Platform strengthens the link between national-level experience and European research discussions.

ERA4Health

EHN continued its engagement with ERA4Health – Fostering a European Research Area for Health Research – through the participation of EHN CEO Birgit Beger in the Strategic Advisory Board, helping ensure that cardiovascular health priorities are reflected in the Partnership's strategic discussions.



**ERA4Health
Partnership**

Supported by the EHN Research Platform, particularly Rebecca Abma-Schouten, Head of Research and Chief Scientific Officer of the Dutch Heart Foundation, EHN contributed perspectives from members active in cardiovascular research funding and advocacy. This included calls for stronger investment in cardiovascular disease prevention, early detection, patient-centred research, and health equity.

As ERA4Health continued developing its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, EHN also highlighted the importance of implementation research in cardiovascular health, particularly the generation of evidence on how prevention strategies, screening programmes, clinical guidelines, digital tools, and care pathways can be effectively adopted and scaled within real-world healthcare systems.

Particular attention was given to persistent research gaps affecting women and children, including sex- and gender-specific cardiovascular risks, pregnancy-related cardiovascular health, congenital heart disease, and the transition from paediatric to adult care.

Through this engagement, EHN aims to help ensure that future ERA4Health priorities remain aligned with public health needs, patient perspectives, and a life-course approach to cardiovascular health.

EU-funded research projects

Throughout 2025, EHN remained actively involved in several EU-funded research projects as a patient representative partner. Across all consortia, EHN plays a central role in facilitating Public and Patient Involvement & Engagement (PPIE), ensuring that patient perspectives are meaningfully integrated into research design, implementation, and dissemination.

HYPERMARKER

An EU-funded project dedicated to the personalised pharmacometabolomic optimisation of hypertension treatment, with the objective of identifying the most effective therapy according to an individual's metabolic profile.

EHN contributed to advancing personalised approaches to hypertension care through active patient engagement. In January 2025, EHN co-hosted a Patient and Public Involvement workshop, bringing together patients to share perspectives on personalised treatment and digital self-management tools.

In May 2025, EHN participated in the project's annual meeting in Birmingham, supporting a dedicated PPIE co-creation workshop where patient representatives contributed to discussions on ethical data use and the development of AI-powered clinical decision tools.

Project partners and patient consultants at the annual meeting of the EU-funded HYPERMARKER project, University of Birmingham, May 2025.



Project partners at the General Assembly of the EU-funded AIDAVA project, Split, Croatia, October 2025.



AIDAVA

An EU-funded project aiming to improve health data interoperability and patient-centred data use.

EHN continued its work on improving health data interoperability and patient engagement within the AIDAVA project. In February 2025, EHN co-hosted a Patient Consultants Workshop in Brussels, bringing together patient advocates, consultants, and project partners to explore the role of health data interoperability in improving patient experiences.

In October 2025, EHN participated in the General Assembly in Split (Croatia) to review project progress and define the next steps. EHN also took part in the dry-run workshop in Maastricht (the Netherlands), to test the AIDAVA prototype. At both events, EHN ensured that patient perspectives remained central to discussions on data governance, data quality, and usability.

AI4HF

An EU-funded project developing a trustworthy AI solution to support personalised risk assessment for people living with heart failure.

EHN remained actively engaged in the AI4HF project throughout 2025, contributing to the integration of patient perspectives in the development of AI-driven solutions for heart failure care.

In May 2025, EHN participated in the consortium meeting in Oxford (UK), supporting discussions on project progress and future milestones. EHN also contributed to patient engagement activities, including the dissemination of surveys aimed at gathering input from patients and clinicians to inform the development of trustworthy and personalised AI tools for heart failure management.

EU Policy Landscape: The EU Safe Hearts Plan

On 16 December 2025, the European Commission adopted the [Safe Hearts Plan](#), marking a historic milestone in addressing cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of death in Europe, affecting more than 60 million people and costing the EU economy over €282 billion annually.

For the first time, the European Union has put forward a coordinated and strategic framework to tackle cardiovascular disease across its full spectrum, from prevention and early detection to treatment, rehabilitation, research and innovation. The Plan sets out a comprehensive approach combining EU-level policy action with Member State implementation, including a pipeline of legislative initiatives, Council Recommendations, and funding opportunities for the period 2026–2029.



EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi at the EACH Cardiovascular Health Summit, Brussels, 2025.

EHN's Contribution and Advocacy

This milestone reflects years of sustained advocacy and collaboration across the cardiovascular health community. The European Heart Network (EHN), together with its members and partners, has played an active role in shaping the policy agenda.

EHN's input was conveyed directly at the highest political level, including to the European Commission leadership driving the initiative. In September 2025, EHN Vice-President Martin Vestweber and CEO Birgit Beger met with EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi, ensuring that the priorities of the cardiovascular community were clearly reflected in the development of the Safe Hearts Plan.

From August to September 2025, the European Commission launched a Call for Evidence to inform the development of the EU Safe Hearts Plan. EHN contributed to this process by submitting a [comprehensive response](#), amplifying the expertise and perspectives of its network and advocating for a strong and coordinated European approach to cardiovascular health.

EHN's recommendations were structured around three key pillars: prioritising health promotion and CVD prevention, empowering patients, and strengthening research and innovation, with health equity as a cross-cutting priority. These priorities are strongly reflected in the final Plan.

Following the Commission's proposal, the European Parliament is expected to develop its position through a report within the SANT Committee, planned for later in 2026. In this context, EHN was invited to provide input in a dedicated event hosted by the report's rapporteur, MEP Romana Jerković. The exchange took place at the European Parliament and brought together key stakeholders, with participation from EHN CEO Birgit Beger and Patients and Research Manager Mehitabel Holler.

In parallel, [EHN's Position Paper on a European Cardiovascular Health Plan](#), published in December 2025, further outlined concrete policy recommendations to support the development of a comprehensive EU strategy.

At the same time, the European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health (EACH), of which EHN is a founding member, contributed to informing the development of the Plan through its roadmap publication, [A European Cardiovascular Health Plan: The Roadmap](#), setting out key components for EU action, including prevention, health checks, research, and coordinated national implementation.

EHN welcomed the adoption of the Plan as a recognition of the essential role of patient organisations and civil society in shaping cardiovascular health policy at EU level, and as a major step forward in placing prevention at the heart of Europe's response to CVD.



Looking Ahead

The adoption of the Safe Hearts Plan marks the beginning of a crucial implementation phase. The coming years will be key to ensuring that the Plan's commitments translate into tangible improvements in cardiovascular health outcomes across Europe.

To support this process, EHN has established a dedicated working group on the European Cardiovascular Health Plan. This initiative aims to mobilise national members, coordinate advocacy efforts, and contribute to translating EU-level priorities into concrete actions at national level.

Particularly encouraging is the attention given to children and young people - an area where EHN, notably through its Young Hearts initiative, is well positioned to continue contributing. In addition, the inclusion of recommendations on cardiovascular health checks represents a valuable step forward for improving early detection across Europe.

EHN will continue to engage with EU institutions, partners, and its membership to ensure that prevention, health equity, and patient involvement remain at the centre of implementation efforts, and that the momentum generated by the adoption of the Plan leads to lasting impact.

EHN Involvement in Multistakeholder Collaboration and Alliances

The European Heart Network (EHN) actively engages in multistakeholder collaboration and strategic alliances to strengthen advocacy efforts and advance cardiovascular health across Europe. In 2025, EHN continued to play a key role in fostering partnerships with leading health organisations and policy platforms, contributing to joint initiatives and coordinated action at European and international level.

WHO (World Health Organization) Regional Office for Europe

75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

At the 75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, October 2025), the European Heart Network (EHN), together with the European Stroke Organisation (ESO), submitted and presented a [joint statement](#) calling for a European Life-Course Action Plan for cardiovascular and brain health.

The statement emphasised that cardiovascular disease and stroke remain the leading causes of death and disability in Europe, despite being largely preventable. It called for a coordinated, equitable, and lifecourse approach to health, aligned with WHO/Europe strategies on child and adolescent health and healthy ageing.

EHN and ESO highlighted key priorities, including strengthening prevention policies, improving access to specialised care, investing in research and innovation, and enhancing data systems to monitor outcomes and inequalities.

EHN continues to work closely with WHO/Europe and partners to support the development of a comprehensive European approach to cardiovascular and brain health across the life course.



EACH (European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health)

EHN is a founding member of each EACH, bringing together leading European and international organisations to promote cardiovascular health as a policy priority at EU level. The Alliance provides a platform to aggregate the knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders and to inform and guide policymakers. EHN is actively involved in the EACH Steering Committee and its working groups on public affairs, advocacy, and communications.



In April 2025, an EACH delegation met with EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi to advance cooperation on the development of a European Cardiovascular Health Plan.

The same month marked the official launch of the [MEP Cardiovascular Health Group](#) in the European Parliament, chaired by MEP Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatia). The Group brings together MEPs committed to reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease and raising it as a priority on the EU political agenda. The Secretariat of the Group is managed by EACH.

EACH also launched its roadmap publication, [A European Cardiovascular Health Plan](#), which set out key pillars and policy recommendations to inform the development of a future EU Cardiovascular Health Plan. The publication contributed to shaping the policy framework later reflected in the European Commission's adoption of the EU Safe Hearts Plan in December 2025.

EHN led the [Stronger Together: Bridging Heart and Stroke Awareness](#) campaign (September–October 2025), bringing partners together to highlight the links between heart disease and stroke and aligning World Heart Day and World Stroke Day under a shared message: “The challenge is one, and so must be our response.”

A major highlight of the year was the [EACH Cardiovascular Health Summit](#) held on 10–11 December 2025 at the Palais des Académies in Brussels. The Summit gathered policymakers, experts, and partners ahead of the European Commission's adoption of the EU Safe Hearts Plan. Featuring a keynote address by Commissioner Várhelyi, discussions covered health inequalities, translating science into policy impact,

EHN delegation at the EACH Cardiovascular Health Summit, Brussels, December 2025.



patient involvement, synergies with cancer, and gender differences in cardiovascular health.

Members and patients from the EHN network were prominently featured through testimonials showcased in the Summit exhibition, bringing lived experience and national best practices directly into the policy space. EHN also contributed to the programme through the participation of Natasha Selberg (Danish Heart Foundation), who joined the panel on prevention to share the Danish experience in improving cardiovascular health outcomes through

collaboration between authorities, NGOs, and the food sector, particularly in promoting healthier nutrition and increasing wholegrain consumption nationwide.

As part of its role within the Alliance, EHN also coordinated the opening European Parliament panel on aspirations for the future EU Cardiovascular Health Plan, leading on outreach, discussion design, and preparation. The panel brought together MEPs Romana Jerković, Victor Negrescu, Christophe Clergeau, and Veronika Ostrihoňová, ensuring strong political dialogue at the outset of the Summit.



EACH Cardiovascular Health Summit, Brussels, December 2025. Left photo, from left to right: Borjana Pervan (World Heart Federation), Michael Rahbek Schmidt (Danish Cardiac Society) and Natasha Selberg (Danish Heart Foundation). Right photo: MEP Romana Jerković addressing the Summit.

WHF (World Heart Federation)

In 2025, EHN joined the World Heart Federation's global campaign "Don't Miss a Beat", raising awareness of the preventable burden of cardiovascular disease worldwide. The campaign highlights the importance of prioritising prevention and strengthening health systems to reduce premature deaths and improve quality of life.



ECDA (European Chronic Disease Alliance)

In 2025, EHN contributed to a joint ECDA statement on the revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive, presented at a European Parliament hearing. The statement emphasised the importance of taxation as an effective tool to reduce tobacco and nicotine consumption and support public health objectives.



ESC (European Society of Cardiology)

EHN maintains a close and continuous dialogue with the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), building on a longstanding history of collaboration and a shared commitment to advancing cardiovascular health in Europe.



In 2025, cooperation was further strengthened through a leadership meeting between ESC and EHN held during the ESC Congress in Madrid. EHN was represented by President Charmaine Griffiths, Board member Dan Gaita, and CEO Birgit Beger. Discussions focused on shared priorities and opportunities for deeper strategic collaboration, including patient engagement, prevention, guideline implementation, and the responsible use of health data and artificial intelligence.

Throughout the year, EHN and ESC continued exploring concrete areas for joint work, including collaboration between young patients and young cardiologists, the Guidelines in Action: Empowering Patients across Europe initiative, and prevention-related activities linked to the EU Safe Hearts Plan. Both organisations also discussed opportunities for cooperation on artificial intelligence projects supporting transparent, equitable, and patient-centred cardiovascular care.

In June 2025, EHN was invited by the ESC to join a multistakeholder task force working on the development of a European cardiometabolic health check aimed at supporting the early detection of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, and chronic kidney disease. EHN is represented in this initiative by Marjaana Lahti-Koski, Secretary General of the Finnish Heart Association.

Smoke Free Partnership

EHN has worked closely with the Smoke Free Partnership (SFP) since its creation in 2006 and officially joined the organisation as a main partner in 2008. As an active member of the SFP Board, EHN supports joint efforts to strengthen tobacco control policies at EU level.



In 2025, EHN contributed to advocacy efforts surrounding the revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive, calling for stronger taxation measures that also cover e-cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine products. EHN additionally advocated for the [revision of wider EU tobacco control legislation](#), including the Tobacco Products Directive and the Tobacco Advertising Directive, with the aim of addressing emerging products and new forms of tobacco and nicotine marketing.

EU Food Policy Coalition

EHN is an active member of the EU Food Policy Coalition, an alliance bringing together civil society organisations working to advance sustainable food systems at EU level. In this capacity, EHN co-chairs the Task Force on Sustainable Food Environments and contributes to the Coalition's work on public food procurement policies.



In 2025, EHN led coalition advocacy efforts calling on the European Commission to make the transition to sustainable food systems a high political priority, including through the [promotion of healthy and affordable diets within the future European Cardiovascular Health Plan](#).

European Health Alliance on Alcohol (EHAA)

In 2025, EHN joined the European Health Alliance on Alcohol (EHAA), a coalition of European health organisations advocating for stronger alcohol policies across Europe. Through this membership, EHN contributes to coordinated, evidence-based efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm and address a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.



During the year, EHN supported [EHAA's statement](#) on the European Parliament's vote on the Wine Package, welcoming the decision to uphold clear and scientifically accurate alcohol labelling. The vote maintained the use of the term "reduced-alcohol" for wines containing up to 6% alcohol by volume (ABV), while rejecting potentially misleading descriptors such as "low" or "light". The legislation also clarified the use of the terms "no alcohol" and "alcohol free" for products containing up to 0.05% alcohol.

AWARE (Alliance for Workplace Cardiac Arrest Response)

In 2025, EHN joined the AWARE Alliance, an initiative led by the European Resuscitation Council (ERC) to improve survival from sudden cardiac arrest across Europe. Through this collaboration, EHN contributes to strengthening workplace preparedness, promoting CPR training, and improving access to life-saving defibrillation.



EHN Member Activities Spotlight

Belgian Heart League – Heart Week 2025 Highlights Congenital Heart Disease

Each year, the Belgian Heart League organises Heart Week, a nationwide awareness initiative dedicated to cardiovascular health. In 2025, the campaign took place from 22 to 29 September under the theme [Congenital Heart Disease](#), shining a spotlight on a condition that affects approximately 1 in 100 children born each year, yet remains largely unknown to the general public.

The campaign reached the public through a wide range of communication tools, including an informational brochure and poster distributed across healthcare settings, a dedicated website, and an awareness video promoted through social media channels.



As part of the campaign, people living with congenital heart disease were invited to draw their own heart, a simple yet powerful gesture that helped give a human face to the condition. The resulting videos generated more than 400,000 views across the League's digital platforms, far exceeding expectations.

The theme resonated strongly with patients and their families, generating highly positive feedback. For many, it marked the first time congenital heart disease had received such visible public attention in Belgium, offering important recognition to a community that often remains underrepresented in broader cardiovascular health discussions.

British Heart Foundation – Driving Momentum for a National Cardiovascular Plan

Since 2023, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) has called on the UK Government to publish a dedicated plan to address the ongoing crisis in heart care in England through its [Hearts Need More](#) campaign.



In July 2025, the UK Government published its new 10 Year Health Plan, outlining a “new era” for the NHS in England built around three major shifts in care: from hospital to community, analogue to digital, and sickness to prevention. Crucially, the plan committed

to developing a Modern Service Framework (MSF) for cardiovascular disease, expected in May 2026.



A previous cardiovascular service framework, published in 2000, set out standards across seven areas of cardiovascular care and contributed to measurable improvements, including reductions in premature cardiovascular deaths and shorter elective waiting times.

Throughout the year, BHF played a key convening role across the cardiovascular community. This included launching a [consensus statement on cardiovascular disease in Parliament](#), signed by more than 60 organisations, and organising a policy workshop to help shape priorities for an ambitious new framework. BHF also engaged extensively with the Department of Health and Social Care during the development of the MSF and will continue to do support its implementation.

Danish Heart Foundation – Advancing Policy Action on Ultra-Processed Foods

In 2025, the Danish Heart Foundation launched its first dedicated [political](#)

[campaign](#) as part of its broader efforts to promote conditions that support heart-healthy living. The



campaign focused on ultra-processed foods, a growing public health concern with major implications for cardiovascular health and significant prevention potential.

The initiative highlighted how ultra-processed foods are often marketed in ways that make products appear healthier than they are, potentially misleading consumers into making unhealthy choices under the assumption that they are selecting healthier options.

As part of the campaign, the Foundation proposed a clear policy measure: requiring the nutritional quality of food products, including ingredient composition and level of processing, to be displayed prominently on the front of packaging. The proposal aimed to improve transparency, enabling consumers to make more informed decisions and facilitating healthier food choices.



The campaign was rolled out through digital platforms, national print and online media, and several of Denmark's largest newspapers.

Among its outcomes, the initiative strengthened the Foundation's role as a policy actor and contributed to shaping both media and political discussions around ultra-processed foods and cardiovascular health.

Dutch Heart Foundation – Strengthening Prevention, Research, and Patient Representation

In 2025, the Dutch Heart Foundation (DHF) merged with patient organisation

Harteraad, fully integrating its activities and welcoming 17 new colleagues dedicated to improving the lives of people living with cardiovascular disease. This important step strengthens the Foundation's ability to represent patient interests across all areas of its work.

The Foundation also continued to expand its public engagement and fundraising activities. DHF achieved record fundraising results in 2025, with more than 10,000 new donors joining its network. Its annual 11 Beaches Walk/Run brought together 6,500 participants, with proceeds supporting cardiovascular research.

On the side prevention side, in 2025 The Foundation officially launched its [Heart Checkpoints](#), offering free cardiovascular measurements within local communities and reaching 14,500 participants across 196



Hartstichting

locations. Meanwhile, the [Neighbourhood AED Initiative](#) contributed to the installation of 647 new automated external defibrillators across the Netherlands.

To advance research and innovation, DHF invested in seven new consortiums linked to the [Dutch Cardiovascular Agenda](#), which is also being positioned as the basis for a future national cardiovascular action plan. The Foundation also invested €1.3 million in the international [ID-SCAD study](#) on spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD), a little-known cause of heart attacks that primarily affects younger women.

Finnish Heart Association – Celebrating 70 Years of Cardiovascular Health

In 2025, the Finnish Heart Association marked a major national milestone by

celebrating its 70th anniversary. Founded in 1955 in response to Finland's exceptionally high cardiovascular mortality rates, the Association used its jubilee year not only to reflect on past achievements, but also to strengthen the future of cardiovascular health promotion, prevention, and advocacy in Finland.

A key anniversary activity was a national seminar held in October in Helsinki, bringing together more than 200 participants from across the health sector, civil society, and decision-making arenas. Combining historical reflection with forward-looking discussion, the seminar explored



FINNISH HEART ASSOCIATION

cardiovascular health as a foundation for national wellbeing and societal resilience. Local Heart Associations across Finland also followed the event through organised viewing sessions, extending its reach nationwide.



To mark the anniversary, the Association awarded €500,000 in research grants to innovative multidisciplinary projects addressing major public health challenges linked to cardiovascular health.

Throughout the year, jubilee communications highlighted 70 years of work in prevention, nutrition, rehabilitation, research, and policy advocacy, while also recognising the invaluable contribution of volunteers across Finland.

German Heart Foundation – Volunteer Meeting 2025: Sharing Ideas, Building Impact

The work of the German Heart Foundation is driven by a strong network



of volunteers. More than 180 regional representatives serve as committed local points of contact, organising information activities and events, building partnerships within their communities, and bringing independent, easy-to-understand education on cardiovascular disease directly to the public.



This civic engagement plays a vital role in strengthening prevention, supporting patients and families, and keeping heart health visible at both local and national level.

A major highlight of the year was the Foundation's large biennial volunteer meeting in Frankfurt, which brought together more than 100 representatives from across Germany. The event provided an important opportunity for volunteers to exchange practical experiences, learn from one another, and develop new ideas for campaigns and cooperation.

Equally important was the dialogue between volunteers and the Foundation's staff. Combining regional insights with the expertise of the national office helps strengthen initiatives, improve support

structures, and reinforce a united voice for cardiovascular health across the country.

Heart Foundation of the Hungarian Society of Cardiology – Advancing Cardiovascular Health through Policy Leadership and Public Engagement

In 2025, Hungary made important progress in advancing cardiovascular health through active contributions



to the development of the National Health Plan, with a strong focus on prevention, early detection, and integrated care pathways. The cardiology community played a key role in shaping strategic priorities, ensuring alignment with the objectives of the EU Safe Hearts Plan.

The participation of European Commissioner for Health Olivér Várhelyi in discussions related to cardiovascular health further reflected the growing political commitment to addressing cardiovascular disease at both national and European level. Through its active involvement in the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Cardiopolicy Group, the Heart Foundation of the Hungarian Society of Cardiology also contributed to advancing the implementation of European cardiovascular health priorities.

Public engagement remained a cornerstone of the Foundation's activities throughout

the year. The Day of the Heart campaign, held in September 2025, brought together healthcare professionals, patient organisations, and the general public in a nationwide initiative promoting cardiovascular awareness and prevention.

The programme included free cardiovascular risk screenings, lifestyle counselling, interactive educational sessions, and expert-led discussions on prevention and early detection of cardiovascular diseases. Particular attention was given to engaging younger populations and encouraging long-term behavioural change.

Together, these initiatives reflect Hungary's commitment to combining policy development with impactful public engagement to strengthen cardiovascular health nationwide.

Hellenic Heart Foundation – CARDIO LIFE STYLE 2025 Promotes Heart Health Awareness

One of the Hellenic Heart Foundation's key initiatives in 2025 was CARDIO LIFE STYLE 2025, a two-day scientific and public engagement event dedicated

to promoting cardiovascular health and prevention. Organised for the second consecutive year, the event focused on the theme "Adopting a Healthy Lifestyle" and aimed to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention among the general public.



The programme brought together experts from a wide range of disciplines, including cardiology, pulmonology, endocrinology, psychology, nutrition, and fitness, who presented 35 topics across 11 thematic sessions. Discussions covered key areas such as nutrition, stress management, physical activity, prevention, rehabilitation, and the role of technology.



Designed to make scientific knowledge accessible and engaging, the event combined educational presentations with interactive activities, workshops, open discussions, and Q&A sessions, allowing participants to interact directly with healthcare professionals and experts.

The initiative also received strong public support from prominent Greek athletes and actors, contributing to broad audience engagement and helping establish CARDIO LIFE STYLE as a growing platform for cardiovascular health awareness in Greece.

Irish Heart Foundation – Strengthening Political Support for Heart and Stroke Advocacy

In 2025, the Irish Heart Foundation strengthened cardiovascular advocacy in



**Irish Heart
Foundation**

Ireland through

the establishment of the Oireachtas Heart & Stroke Group, a new cross-party parliamentary group bringing together political representatives committed to advancing heart and stroke issues within Ireland's political system.

The initiative builds on the Foundation's [Patient Champions Programme](#), launched in 2023 to support grassroots patient advocates in raising awareness of cardiovascular health needs across Ireland. Through community advocacy and national campaigning efforts, the programme has helped strengthen patient voices in public and political discussions on cardiovascular disease.



On 9 April 2025, more than 60 political representatives from across Ireland met with the Irish Heart Foundation and members of its Patient Champions community at the Irish Parliament to formally launch the group.

Since its creation, the group has facilitated regular dialogue on key cardiovascular issues, including women's heart health, heart failure, and childhood obesity.

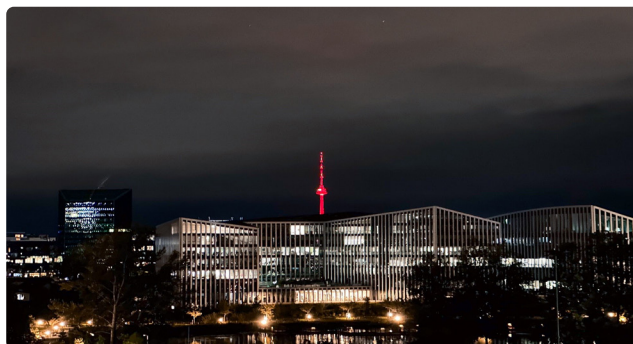
The Patient Champions Programme now includes more than 50 patient advocates from across Ireland, reinforcing the Foundation's commitment to ensuring that lived experience remains at the centre of cardiovascular policy and advocacy efforts nationwide.

Alongside its advocacy work, the Irish Heart Foundation continued to expand its wider public health impact in 2025 through nationwide prevention initiatives, CPR training programmes, free health checks, and patient support services supporting communities across Ireland. Throughout the year, the Foundation delivered more than 10,000 free health checks, trained over 80,000 people in CPR, and continued to strengthen support services for people living with heart disease and stroke.

Lithuanian Heart Association – Advancing a National Safe Hearts Plan

In 2025, the Lithuanian Heart Association began work on a national cardiovascular health strategy together with the Health Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, the Ministry of Health, and the Lithuanian Society of Cardiology. The emerging plan sets out short-term priorities and actions for 2026–2028, laying the foundation for stronger cardiovascular prevention and care in Lithuania.

Ahead of and during World Heart Day (29 September), the Association organised nationwide prevention and awareness activities to highlight the burden of cardiovascular disease and promote heart-healthy lifestyles. Events held across Lithuania included cardiovascular screenings and consultations in Vilnius, alongside public awareness initiatives linked to the global “Go Red” movement, with the Vilnius TV Tower illuminated in red. To further support awareness and education, the Association also produced educational materials for patients and organised conferences for healthcare professionals throughout the campaign period.

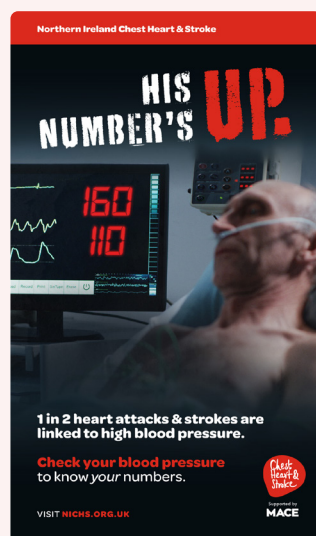


Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke – “Your Numbers Up” Blood Pressure Awareness Campaign

Running throughout May and June 2025 and coinciding with World Hypertension Day, Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke delivered its annual [*Your Numbers Up*](#) campaign, raising awareness of the link between high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

The prevention-focused campaign aimed to encourage people to know their blood pressure numbers and understand the importance of regular checks in reducing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Public messaging highlighted that 1 in 2 heart attacks and strokes are linked to high blood pressure.

The initiative addresses growing concerns around undiagnosed hypertension in Northern Ireland, where an estimated 120,000 people, around a quarter of the adult population, are living with high blood pressure without realising it.



The campaign reached the public through radio, outdoor, and digital advertising, alongside free blood pressure checks organised across Northern Ireland. A patient case story featuring an individual diagnosed with dangerously high blood pressure during one of the screenings also formed part of the campaign's public outreach efforts, further highlighting the crucial importance of early detection initiatives.

SIPREC – Advancing Cardiovascular Prevention Policy in Italy

In 2025, the Italian Society for Cardiovascular Prevention (SIPREC)



SIPREC

società italiana per la prevenzione cardiovascolare

continued to play a leading role in promoting cardiovascular health and prevention across Italy through scientific, public health, and policy initiatives.

Throughout the year, SIPREC organised its 23rd National Congress and promoted the 5th Italian National Day for Cardiovascular Prevention, raising awareness of cardiovascular risk factors and strengthening prevention efforts nationwide.



At policy level, SIPREC contributed to several official initiatives of the Italian Ministry of Health, including documents on the update of the Italian Cardiovascular Risk Chart, air pollution and cardiovascular disease, and therapeutic adherence. The Society also supported the development of national guidelines on the Mediterranean Diet, telemedicine, hypertension, acute coronary syndromes, and atrial fibrillation.

Public engagement remained central to SIPREC's activities. The Society organised obesity awareness programmes and supported initiatives such as the Tour della Salute ("Healthy Tour"), promoting cardiovascular prevention and healthier lifestyles across Italian communities.

SIPREC also actively participated in collaborations with scientific societies, patient associations, and institutional initiatives, while contributing to international projects and discussions linked to the European Cardiovascular Health Plan and broader prevention efforts, including nutrition and healthy food systems.

In parallel, SIPREC continued its educational activities through workplace health programmes, first aid courses, and regular participation in national radio and television programmes dedicated to cardiovascular prevention.

Slovenian Heart Foundation – Promoting Cardiovascular Health Among Young People

Slovenian Heart Foundation (SHF) is committed to prioritising cardiovascular



health from a young age, recognising it as one of the strongest foundations for a longer life free of disease. Through various initiatives, the Foundation is helping build healthier future generations.

In 2025, the Slovenian Heart Foundation continued the implementation of its flagship prevention programme [*Young People Turning the World Around*](#), now in its 14th year. The initiative promotes healthy lifestyles among primary school children, teachers, and families, encouraging cardiovascular prevention from an early age and fostering a lifelong approach to heart health.

As part of the programme, participating children receive the educational Little Heart Bimbam booklet, which uses playful activities and classroom discussions to explore topics such as heart



health, nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of harmful habits. Through these activities, children are encouraged to become ambassadors of healthy living within their families and communities.

In 2025, the programme reached 10,500 pupils and mentors across Slovenia and included 30 specialised workshops involving 750 children. Participants received certificates of recognition, while schools were provided with sports equipment to further encourage active lifestyles.

The initiative is further connected to the [DISCONNECT](#) project, which addresses the impact of excessive screen use and unrealistic body ideals promoted through social media on physical and mental health. Through complementary educational activities, the programme encourages healthier digital habits and promotes movement breaks during prolonged screen use among children and young people.

Spanish Heart Foundation – Raising Awareness and Strengthening Patient Engagement

In 2025, the Spanish Heart Foundation (FEC), together with the Spanish Society of Cardiology (SEC) and its Heart Rhythm Association, launched the [Feel Your Rhythm: Take Your Pulse](#) campaign to raise awareness of atrial fibrillation (AF), the most common cardiac arrhythmia and a major risk factor for stroke and heart failure.

Launched on the occasion of Pulse Day, the campaign highlighted the importance of early detection and encouraged people to regularly check their pulse and recognise potential symptoms of AF. Educational resources and prevention tools were made



available through the dedicated platform sienteturitmo.com, providing accessible information for both patients and healthcare professionals.

Patient engagement also remained a central priority for the Foundation throughout the year. The [3rd National Congress of the Organisation of Patient Associations](#) brought together 60 cardiovascular patient associations from across Spain to strengthen collaboration, empower patients and their families through self-care training tools, and encourage the exchange of best practices.



Organised in a hybrid format, the congress combined in-person participation with open-access online streaming, expanding its reach and reinforcing dialogue between patients, patient organisations, and the healthcare system.

Swedish Heart and Lung Association – Hjärtdagen Strengthens the Call for a National Heart and Vascular Plan

In 2025, the Swedish Heart and Lung Association



used World Heart Day (Hjärtdagen) as a key platform to strengthen the call for a comprehensive Swedish Heart and Vascular Plan. Through national advocacy, broad network-based collaboration, and targeted media outreach, the initiative highlighted persistent gaps in coordinated care, follow-up, and rehabilitation for people living with cardiovascular disease in Sweden.

In line with growing European momentum towards long-term cardiovascular health planning, the Association worked to ensure that Sweden benefits from these developments. Under the theme of equal, lifelong cardiovascular care, [Hjärtdagen](#) brought together patient voices, healthcare professionals, and decision-makers to underline the need for a coherent national approach that reduces regional disparities and strengthens continuity of care.



By linking a globally recognised awareness day with concrete policy demands, the initiative helped keep cardiovascular health high on the political agenda and reinforced the important role of patient organisations in shaping future health strategies.

In collaboration with key stakeholders, these efforts contributed to the Swedish government's end-of-year announcement commissioning the National Board of Health and Welfare to develop a national action plan for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, recognising patient voices as an essential part of the process.

Swedish Heart Lung Foundation – Green Light for a National Cardiovascular Plan in Sweden

In 2025, the Swedish government announced the development



of a [national action plan for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases](#), following sustained advocacy from the Swedish Heart Lung Foundation and key partners.

For several years, the Heart-Lung Foundation, together with the Swedish Heart and Lung Association and the Swedish Society of Cardiology, has worked to highlight the need for a comprehensive national cardiovascular plan. The growing European momentum around cardiovascular health policy has also played an important role in supporting these national efforts.

In November 2025, the government tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with developing the plan, which will cover the full care pathway, from prevention and early detection to treatment, updated guidelines, and stronger patient involvement.

The assignment's strong focus on prevention has been particularly welcomed, especially given that more than half of certain cardiovascular diseases are considered preventable today.

The ambition of the new plan is to make healthy choices easier for everyone while ensuring that healthcare development remains evidence-based and that new knowledge is effectively translated into practice. According to the government, the plan aims to improve early access to care, reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease, and strengthen healthcare equity across the country.

Turkish Heart Foundation – Promoting Heart Health Through Nationwide Cycling Events

For 38 years, the Turkish Heart Foundation has organised its annual Heart Weeks campaign across the country, raising awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention and promoting healthier lifestyles nationwide.

As part of these activities, the Foundation continued its long-running [nationwide cycling initiative](#) in 2025, now organised for the 18th consecutive year under the slogan

“Your Heart Works for You 24/7! But What About You?”

Designed to promoting the benefits of physical activity for cardiovascular health, the initiative brought together cycling enthusiasts of all ages in approximately 35 cities across the country, first and foremost in Istanbul. While cycling through the streets, participants wore campaign vests carrying heart health messages to promote awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention.



Over the years, the cycling events have become an important public engagement activity for the Foundation, helping reach wide audiences and encouraging healthier lifestyles through community participation and visibility in public spaces.



EHN Governance and Secretariat

Information about EHN's structure, governance, and finances is publicly available on its website, including:

- [Homepage](#)
- [Governance](#)
- [The Board](#)
- [Secretariat](#)

Membership

In 2025, EHN had 31 member organisations from 27 countries across Europe. The full list of EHN members is available on

the EHN website: [EHN Members](#).

General Assembly

The General Assembly consists of all EHN member organisations. Its primary role is to establish broad strategic and policy guidelines. Additionally, its responsibilities include:

- Electing the Board and its President
- Approving the admission of new member organisations
- Approving budgets and annual accounts

EHN Board

The EHN Board meets four times per year, with two meetings held in person and two conducted online. The Board consists of a minimum of three and a maximum of eight members. In 2025, the EHN Board was composed of eight members.



Charmaine Griffiths,
President

British Heart Foundation



Robert Keller
Vice-President

Swiss Heart Foundation



Kristina Sparreljung
Treasurer

Swedish Heart Lung Foundation



Dan Gaita

Romanian Heart Foundation



Paola Santalucia

SPELS Onlus



Hans Snijder

Dutch Heart Foundation



Martin Vestweber

German Heart Foundation



Nataša Jan

Slovenian Heart Foundation

EHN Secretariat

Since 1992, EHN has maintained an office in Brussels, and in 1993, it became a legally registered non-profit association in Belgium (AISBL).

In 2025, the EHN Brussels office had a team of seven people coordinating the Network's work. Serving as the central hub for communication among member organisations, the office plays a key role in EHN's advocacy efforts with European institutions. It also initiates research and publications to support its policy work, organises the Annual Workshop, seminars, and meetings for members, and actively participates in pan-European projects.



Birgit Beger

Chief Executive Officer



Maria Cummins

*Executive Assistant to the
CEO – Copy Editor*



Marleen Kestens

*Manager, Cardiovascular Disease
Prevention Policies*



Alessandra Boschi

*Advocacy and
Communication Coordinator*



Mehitabel Holler

*Patients and Research
Manager*



Gregorio Sambataro

EU Projects Manager



Clémence Gilbert

Office Manager

Membership Overview

The European Heart Network (EHN) is proud to count 30 member organisations across 27 European countries. Our members consist of national heart foundations and associations, all united in their commitment to preventing cardiovascular diseases (CVD) throughout Europe. These organisations play a crucial role in supporting patients, advocating for patient interests, and funding vital research to improve cardiovascular health across the continent.



Country	Member Organisation
Belgium	Belgian Heart League ♥
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Foundation of Health and Heart
Croatia	Croatian Heart House Foundation
Czech Republic	Czech Alliance for Cardiovascular Diseases
Denmark	Danish Heart Foundation ♥
Faroese Islands	Faroese Heart Foundation
Finland	Finnish Heart Association ♥
Germany	German Heart Foundation ♥
Greece	Hellenic Heart Foundation
Hungary	Heart Foundation of Hungarian Society of Cardiology
Iceland	Icelandic Heart Association
Ireland	Irish Heart Foundation ♥
Israel	Israeli Heart Association
Italy	Italian Heart Foundation
	Italian Society for Cardiovascular Prevention (SIPREC)
	SPELS
Latvia	Latvian Heart Health Promotion Alliance
Lithuania	Lithuanian Heart Association
Netherlands	Dutch Heart Foundation ♥
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Chest and Stroke
Portugal	Portuguese Heart Foundation ♥
Romania	Romanian Heart Foundation ♥
Serbia	Serbian Heart Foundation
Slovenia	Slovenian Heart Foundation ♥
Spain	Spanish Heart Foundation
Sweden	Swedish Heart and Lung Association ♥
	Swedish Heart Lung Foundation
Switzerland	Swiss Heart Foundation
Turkey	Turkish Heart Foundation
United Kingdom	British Heart Foundation

♥ These member organisations are either dedicated patient organisations or organisations in which working for and with patients constitutes a significant part of their activities.

Accounts

Auditor's report to the Board of the European Heart Network for the year ended December 31, 2025

We have reviewed the financial statements on pages 3 to 9, which have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out on page 9, to the records maintained by the European Heart Network.

Respective responsibilities of the Board and auditors

The Board and the Company's management are responsible for the preparation of these financial statements. Our responsibility is to issue a report on these financial statements based on our review.

We conducted our review in accordance with the International Standard on Review Engagements 2400. This Standard requires that we plan and perform the review to obtain moderate assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. A review is limited primarily to inquiries of company personnel and analytical procedures applied to financial data and thus provides less assurance than an audit.

Opinion

We certify that we have obtained all the information and explanations required by us as auditors and that the attached income and expenditure account for the year ended DECEMBER 31, 2025 and the balance sheet at that date are in agreement with the records maintained by the European Heart Network.

Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the accompanying financial statements are not presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with International Accounting Standards.

Kortrijk, 07/05/2026

CALLENS, VANDELANOTTE NV

Represented by Frank VANDELANOTTE

Certified Public Accountant

Key figures

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Member subscriptions	610.081,00	567.883,00	640.844,88	617.185,92	476.060,41	581.761,96
EU grants & other income	304.392,64	529.689,22	86.517,61	56.929,31	33.519,87	67.287,54
Financial income	17.559,33	14.826,19	5.155,03	19,95	651,45	617,86
Total income	932.032,97	1.112.398,41	732.517,52	674.135,18	510.231,73	649.667,36
Regular expenditures	793.910,07	834.930,66	694.536,94	639.479,72	538.007,44	622.390,02
Project expenditures	224.876,37	224.184,44	144.642,08	84.181,75	34.185,06	60.616,16
Total expenditures	1.018.786,44	1.059.115,10	839.179,02	723.661,47	572.192,50	683.006,18
Surplus / (Deficit)	(86.753,47)	53.283,31	(106.661,50)	(49.526,29)	(61.960,77)	(33.338,82)
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Reserve	550.000,00	550.000,00	550.000,00	550.000,00	550.000,00	550.000,00
Net current assets	445.061,39	531.814,86	478.531,55	585.193,05	634.719,34	696.680,11
Total Equity	995.061,39	1.081.814,86	1.028.531,55	1.135.193,05	1.184.719,34	1.246.680,11

Income

1. Member subscriptions	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Belgian Heart League	4.890,00	4.492,00
Bosnia Herzegovina Foundation of Health and Heart	1.223,00	1.123,00
British Heart Foundation	198.673,00	182.469,00
Croatian Heart House Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Czech Alliance for Cardiovascular Diseases	1.223,00	0,00
Danish Heart Foundation	48.872,00	46.077,00
Dutch Heart Foundation	117.322,00	115.572,00
Faroese Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Finnish Heart Association	15.042,00	13.220,00
German Heart Foundation	42.031,00	35.911,00
Hellenic Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Hungarian Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Icelandic Heart Association	4.890,00	4.492,00
Israeli Heart Association	1.223,00	1.123,00
Irish Heart Foundation	10.287,00	9.735,00
Italian Association against Thrombosis and Cardiovascular Diseases (ALT)	1.223,00	0,00
Italian Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Italian Society for Cardiovascular Prevention	1.223,00	1.123,00
Lithuanian Heart Association	1.223,00	1.123,00
Netherlands, Heart and Vessel Group	4.890,00	4.492,00
Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke Association	10.899,00	9.940,00
Portuguese Heart Foundation	4.890,00	4.492,00
Romanian Heart Foundation	4.890,00	2.246,00
Serbian Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Slovenian Heart Foundation	4.890,00	4.492,00
Spanish Heart Foundation	4.890,00	4.492,00
Swedish Heart and Lung Association	5.621,00	5.073,00
Swedish Heart Lung Foundation	94.425,00	85.901,00
Swiss Heart Foundation	16.780,00	15.997,00
Turkish Heart Foundation	1.223,00	1.123,00
Portuguese Heart Foundation - membership 2023	0,00	5.150,00
Serbian Heart Foundation - membership 2023	0,00	1.287,00
SUB TOTAL	610.081,00	567.883,00

Income

2. Special contributions	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Swedish Heart Lung Foundation	75.970,00	20.000,00
Danish Heart Foundation	15.000,00	0,00
German Heart Foundation	10.000,00	7.000,00
Swiss Heart Foundation	5.294,37	0,00
EU Operating Grant (*)	0,00	438.609,52
NCD Alliance Award	43.148,13	12.646,75
AIDAVA Project - revenu	43.418,41	18.829,05
HYPERMARKER Project - revenu	44.649,60	11.280,80
AI4HF Project	21.421,93	21.323,10
Other reimbursements		
SUB TOTAL	258.902,44	529.689,22
3. Investment income	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
	17.559,33	14.826,19
4. Exceptional income	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Non-recurrent result - EHN Project Fund 2018	40.009,37	0,00
Non-recurrent result - EHN Project Fund 2019	5.480,83	0,00
	45.490,20	0,00
	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
TOTAL INCOME	932.032,97	1.112.398,41

Expenditures

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Personnel (excl. specific projects)	623.649,29	669.757,41
Office	11.699,32	20.467,96
Property (incl. insurance)	53.604,27	53.180,31
Travel, subsistence, meetings and conferences (incl. Board)	6.055,75	4.827,43
Office equipment, computers, IT support	9.074,74	19.048,53
Depreciation (office equipment/computers)	2.717,91	5.749,57
Professional fees	74.709,91	52.460,33
Membership fees	3.627,07	3.574,78
Bank charges	1.723,92	674,36
Taxes	7.047,89	5.189,98
Total regular expenditures	793.910,07	834.930,66
Smoke Free Partnership	10.000,00	25.096,11
European Chronic Disease Alliance	0,00	3.999,99
Annual Workshop	14.145,78	38.065,16
Patients Group seminar	5.432,34	15.952,26
CEEC Meeting	0,00	1.816,57
Board Meetings	3.654,01	2.891,33
Filtered Project	64.993,68	675,29
Communication	35.615,91	53.840,39
Big Data at Heart	0,00	20.103,29
AIDAVA Project	34.734,73	15.063,24
European Alliance Cardiovascular Health	1.525,00	20.597,69
Hypermarker Horizon Project	35.719,68	9.024,64
AI4HF	17.137,54	17.058,48
CDV & Alcohol paper	434,00	
EMA Anniversary	153,70	
ESC Congress	1.295,00	
Cities at Heart - EU Project 2025	35,00	
Project fund		
Total operational and project expenditures	224.876,37	224.184,44
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1.018.786,44	1.059.115,10
TOTAL INCOME	932.032,97	1.112.398,41

SURPLUS/DEFICIT	-86.753,47	53.283,31
RETAINED RESULT BEGINNING OF PERIOD	531.814,86	478.531,55
RETAINED RESULT END OF PERIOD	445.061,39	531.814,86

Balance sheet as at December 31, 2025

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Fixed Assets	54.893,44	54.497,37
Current Assets		
Debtors and prepayments	71.553,08	241.696,29
Cash at bank	1.343.884,21	1.314.253,46
	1.470.330,73	1.610.447,12
Current Liabilities and Provisions		
Reserve	550.000,00	550.000,00
Accrued costs and expenses	278.302,34	397.130,26
Prepaid income	196.967,00	131.502,00
	1.025.269,34	1.078.632,26
Net current assets (liabilities)	445.061,39	531.814,86

AIDAVA Project

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Project expenses	34.734,73	15.063,24
Personnel cost	22.647,99	8.748,19
Staff travel and subsistence		
Other costs	12.086,74	6.315,05
Project income	43.418,41	18.829,05
AIDAVA Project	8.683,68	3.765,81

AI4HF Project

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Project expenses	17.137,54	17.058,48
Personnel cost	16.599,68	9.445,75
Staff travel and subsistence		
Other costs	537,86	7.612,73
Project income	21.421,93	21.323,10
AI4HF Project	4.284,39	4.264,62

HYPERMARKER Project

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Project expenses	35.719,68	9.025,64
Personnel cost	18.114,46	7.509,04
Staff travel and subsistence		
Other costs	17.605,22	1.516,60
Project income	44.649,60	11.280,80
HYPERMARKER Project	8.929,92	2.255,16

FILTERED Project

	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Project expenses	64.993,68	675,29
Personnel cost	38.718,25	0,00
Staff travel and subsistence		
Other costs	26.275,43	675,29
Project income	43.148,13	0,00
FILTERED Project	-21.845,55	-675,29

Notes on the accounts for the year ended December 31, 2025

1. Staff costs	2025 (Euro)	2024 (Euro)
Salaries	514.696,91	457.659,20
Group insurance	22.485,58	23.877,87
Social security employers	120.555,80	104.567,98
Accrued vacation pay	21.708,87	8.089,39
Insurance personnel	9.140,56	6.708,27
Meal vouchers	11.818,21	12.655,39
Other personnel charges	3.171,75	3.510,19
Social office	15.607,49	12.434,21
Recruitment fee	544,50	898,00
Training team / Development	0,00	0,00
Interim	0,00	65.059,89
Personnel costs to recover	-96.080,38	-25.702,98
	623.649,29	669.757,41

2. Principal accounting policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the organisation's accounts:

Accounting basis

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention

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