



EU ORGANISATIONS JOIN FORCES TO CALL FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS THE INCREASING BURDEN OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Embargoed until 16 June, 7h00 CET

Brussels, 16 June 2021: Today, 12 key EU and international health organisations signed a joint statement to call on the EU to develop a comprehensive EU Plan on cardiovascular disease (CVD)¹, which is the first cause of death in Europe², affecting millions of people.

Alarming, after a decline in mortality over the past several decades, the numbers are rising again³: CVD accounts for 36% of all deaths and around 20% of all premature deaths (before 65) in the EU⁴. CVD is linked to huge health inequalities, be it between geographies or be it by gender. Impacting people of all ages, CVD is set to substantially increase as Europe’s population is ageing.

Cardiovascular disease is not always preventable. Many conditions can be inherited, some may be caused or worsened by other chronic conditions or their treatments, and others may be incurred or exacerbated due to ageing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the scenario, causing damage to the European citizens’ heart and vascular systems. Many of those patients most impacted by the pandemic have had underlying cardiovascular disease. At the same time, COVID-19 has impacted diagnosis and treatment through reductions in doctor visits and heart checks. There is a clear opportunity to improve the health of European citizens by addressing the underlying burden of cardiovascular disease, with preventive action where possible and with appropriate treatment and intervention where this is not possible.

Therefore, the signatory organisations jointly call on EU decision-makers to develop a comprehensive **EU Plan on CVD** to ensure that European citizens live longer, healthier lives – regardless of their gender, or where they were born or live in the EU – and enable them contributing to society and the economy. Thus, ensure more Health Equity across the EU.

Through an EU wide CVD Plan ambitious incentives and measures should be implemented across prevention, screening, early detection, access to treatment and rehabilitation to keep people in good

¹ Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a group of disorders, all related to the heart and circulatory (vascular) system. Cardiovascular disease takes many forms which include ischemic heart disease (also known as coronary heart disease), different types of strokes, peripheral artery disease, heart rhythm disturbances (e.g., atrial fibrillation), heart failure, congenital heart diseases, inherited (genetic) conditions, valvular heart disease and vascular dementia.

² Cardiovascular disease facts and figures, MEP Heart Group, <https://mepheartgroup.eu/facts-figures/>

³ British Heart Foundation. *Heart and circulatory disease deaths in under 75s see first sustained rise in 50 years*. Available from: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2019/may/heart-and-circulatory-disease-deaths-in-under-75s-see-first-sustained-rise-in-50-years> [Last accessed: September 2020].; Shah NS, Lloyd-Jones DM, O’Flaherty M, et al. Trends in Cardiometabolic Mortality in the United States, 1999–2017. Research letter. *JAMA*. 2019;322(8):780–782.

⁴ [ESC-EHN Blueprint Digital Edition](#) June 2020

health and optimise their quality of life. This will strengthen the resilience at the population level, whilst making efficient use of healthcare resources.

IT IS TIME TO ACT. The undersigned organisations stand ready to collaborate with EU institutions and national governments to develop and implement such a plan to address the burden of cardiovascular disease. We have a unique window of opportunity to invest into better cardiovascular care for citizens across the EU. We now need the political commitment to make it happen through an EU policy plan on cardiovascular health.

End.

Note to the editor:

This press release accompanies the release of a joint statement, sent to European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, and the Council. Please find it [HERE](#)

Spokespersons from all signatory organisations are available for comments or interviews. For press queries, please contact representatives of the initiators of the joint statement:

Birgit Beger, EHN CEO, bbeger@ehnheart.org

Elisabetta Zanon, ESC Director of Advocacy, ezanon@escardio.org

Jerick Parrone, MTE Senior Communications Manager, j.parrone@medtecheurope.org

About the signatory organisations:

The signatory organisations represent all aspects of cardiovascular care: from the patients who suffer from the disease to the clinicians and health professionals who take care of them, from health insurers to research organisations, and industries that develop the medical and technological innovations to improve the management and care of CVD.

The signatory organisations will work together to raise awareness of cardiovascular health, and advocate to address the burden of cardiovascular disease.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES:

International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)

European Trade Association representing the medical imaging, radiotherapy, health ICT and electromedical industries (COCIR)

European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA)

European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries Associations (EFPIA)

European Heart Network (EHN)

European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA)

European Society of Cardiology (ESC)

European Confederation of Pharmaceuticals Entrepreneurs (EUCOPE)

The European FH Patient Network (FH Europe)

Global Heart Hub (GHH)

European Trade Association representing the medical technology industries including diagnostics, medical devices, and digital health (MedTech Europe)

Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE)