



# IFMSA

International Federation of  
Medical Students' Associations

## **Statement of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations on Noncommunicable Diseases**

*63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe  
September 16-19<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Cesme Izmir, Turkey*

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) represents more than one million medical students from around the world. We, the future doctors and health experts, will work in health care around the globe in order to relieve people from the burden of disease. We too believe that Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) are the greatest cause of preventable mortality and morbidity in the WHO European Region. Thus, we strongly endorse the Vienna Declaration on Nutrition and Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020. However, we would like to extend the scope of action, which should not only be limited to nutrition and obesity.

**First.** While we agree with the goals set, we encourage the WHO Regional Office for Europe and its members to provide additional attention on the control of tobacco and alcohol use. Furthermore, we ask WHO EURO and Member States to maintain a critical perspective on industries producing unhealthy food and beverages. It is the role of public health to counterbalance economic interests with strict regulations that protect the public from harmful and excessive use. Unregulated engagement with industry often leads to weak policies and poor decision-making that is prone to undue influence and corruption. At a bare minimum, we urge the WHO to ensure transparency while implementing both the European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012 as well as the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2012–2016.

**Second.** The European Region should make use of trade policy to assure a grip on the rising burden of NCDs. Such policy can include, but is not limited to, labels and warnings to regulate trade with unhealthy products. Additionally, we call for the elimination of government subsidies on harmful products. In combination with a taxation system of alcohol and tobacco that is to be implemented equally in all countries of the region, these cost-effective measures can counterbalance NCDs.

While the efforts of the past years since the earlier First Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy for the WHO European Region (2000–2005) have led positive results for the EURO region, the awareness and political commitment among Member States still have room for optimization. The IFMSA calls for ongoing actions and plans to counteract NCDs in the WHO EURO region.

*This statement is a response to the following agenda items:*

*3 (a) Follow-up to the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases*

*5 (g) (iii) WHO European Ministerial Conference on nutrition and noncommunicable diseases in the context of Health 2020, Vienna, Austria, 4–5 July 2013*



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*5 (k) - Tobacco control in the European Region*

*- Implementation of the Second WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007–2012 (EUR/RC57/R4 and EUR/RC58/R5)*

*- Action Plan for the implementation of the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2012–2016 (EUR/RC61/R3)*

## **IFMSA at a Glance**

Founded in 1951, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) is the world's oldest and largest independent Medical Students' organization representing medical students from around the world. IFMSA currently maintains 115 National Member Organizations from more than 100 countries that are the home to about 1.2 million medical students. IFMSA is recognized as an international nongovernmental organization by the United Nations and the World Health Organization and is a proud partner of various international bodies such as the World Medical Association. At the European level, IFMSA has also institutional relations with the Council of Europe, the European Union Health Policy Forum, the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF), the Association for Medical Education in Europe, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), among others.

Created to make a positive impact on the world, IFMSA has inspired generations of medical students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to take on current and emerging challenges in medicine and global health. Annually, the IFMSA network provides opportunities to medical students through its two general assemblies, five regional meetings, around 10,000 international exchange program slots, hundreds of national and international projects, and dozens of international campaigns on issues ranging from climate change to global health equity.