

**Statement of support for provisional agenda item 1(c):
The European Programme of Work (2020-2025) – “United Action for Better Health in Europe”
70th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe
Virtual Session, 14-15 September 2020**

The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD), representing 35.000 dietitians (half of those in the region) warmly welcomes the new WHO European Programme of Work (EPW) and the opportunity to comment further on the following agenda items:

Lessons learned about Nutritional support during the COVID-19 pandemic (item 2a)

Dietitians drive health equity by supporting prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as in infectious diseases, such as COVID-19. It is increasingly clear that unhealthy populations are at greater risk of infectious diseases and NCDs, illuminating the vital role that dietitians play in improving health in clinical settings, primary care, public health and food service. In response to an urgent need for access to nutritional support information for COVID-19 patients, EFAD collated resources for dietitians and other health professionals from across Europe and hosted webinars on rehabilitation following COVID infection.¹

Dietitians strengthen public health capacities and services: EUR/RC70/8(B)

EFAD's white paper – *Sustainable Health through the Life Span: Nutrition as a smart investment for Europe*² details many areas where good nutrition can deliver a return on investment. Documented evidence^{3,4,5} illustrates that every €1 spent on dietetic counselling results €14 to €63 worth of societal benefits.

The European Dietetic Action Plan (EuDAP) –aligned to the WHO Food and Nutrition and Action Plan 2015-2020 (FNAP) – offers evidence of actions by dietitians to meet the WHO FNAP. Data from dietitians across Europe is available in the EuDAP database and reports⁶

People at the heart: EUR/RC70/8(C)

Citizens must be empowered to make healthy lifestyle choices without being pushed into poverty. Dietitians strengthen public health capacities and services, creating people-centred health systems that promote health and well-being.

Food: essential to NCD prevention and control: EUR/RC70/8(G)

Health outcomes improve with healthy diets, making food a critical part of the health care process, especially for at-risk groups such as the elderly. Improving diets also helps prevent and control NCDs, keeping citizens healthier for longer. Sustainable healthy diets promote health over the life span, leading to a healthier population and planet.

We welcome a healthy discussion on how to improve the EPW and evaluate areas to strengthen. For example, we believe that health care teams in at least half of member states have either no dietitians at all or at least, none who are educated and trained to EFAD European standards.⁷ Even in member states where dietetics is a degree-level registered profession, the number of dietitians per capita is often woefully low, especially in the Eastern European countries. **EFAD calls on WHO to map dietetic provision in all member states and support the introduction of dietetics where it is lacking.** If every European citizen has access to dietary and nutritional advice from a trained professional, we would truly “leave no-one behind”.

References

¹ EFAD, COVID-19 Information on Nutrition Support. Retrieved from <http://www.efad.org/en-us/covid-19/>

² EFAD, Sustainable Diets through the Lifespan. Retrieved from <http://www.efad.org/en-us/reports-and-papers/efad-reports/efad-white-paper/>

³ Freijer, K. (2018). Nutrition economics and the economic value of the dietitian. *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, 72, 65–79.

⁴ SEO Economic Research. (2015, April). The social costs and benefits of dietetics for malnourished patients in hospital. Retrieved from <http://www.efad.org/media/1401/costs-and-benefits-of-dietetics-for-malnourished-patients-in-hospitals.pdf>.

⁵ Lammers, M, & Kok, L. (2012). Cost-benefit analysis of dietary treatment. *SEO Economic Research*, 22, 76A

⁶ The European Dietetic Action Plan (EuDAP) "*Dietitians stating clearly their commitment to action for health improvement through nutrition across the social gradient*" Retrieved from <https://www.eudap.org/>

⁷ EFAD, <http://www.efad.org/en-us/reports-and-papers/efad-standards/>