



fighting heart disease  
and stroke  
european heart network

**Written statement by the European Heart Network (EHN) made at the sixty-sixth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, Copenhagen, 12-15 September 2016, on the *Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)***

August 2016

## **STATEMENT**

*EHN welcomes the WHO Regional Office for Europe's proposed **Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)**.*

*EHN supports the Plan's vision, goal, objectives, strategic approach, and targets as well as its focus and supporting areas.*

*EHN notes that the Plan cautions that voluntary agreements are often ineffective and regulation or legislation is often needed.*

*In particular, EHN welcomes that the Plan:*

- highlights that **cardiovascular disease (CVD)** remains the leading cause of premature mortality in the European Region
- requires a focus on **population-based interventions** notably on **tobacco control**; reduction of consumption of **salt, saturated fat and trans fatty acids**; **hypertension control**; as well as, in particular in Eastern European countries, **alcohol control**; as well as **early detection** and **management** of disease
- promotes a focus on a broader set of risk factors and determinants, including **air pollution**
- calls specifically for action to:
  - o adopt strong measures that reduce the overall impact on children and adults of all forms of **marketing** (including online) of foods high in energy, saturated fats, trans fats, free sugars and/or salt, and consider and implement a range of **economic tools** that could discourage the consumption of such foods and improve the affordability and availability of a healthy diet, including, where appropriate, **taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages**
  - o mainstream product improvement and reformulation supported by improvement in **interpretative front-of-pack labelling**
  - o develop, extend and evaluate **salt reduction strategies** to continue progress across food product categories and market segments
  - o ensure that **physical activity interventions** take into consideration the specific needs and opportunities of different groups across their lives

- support the regional implementation of World Health Assembly resolution WHA68.8 on health and the environment, addressing the health impact of **air pollution**
- strengthen the capacity of primary health care to prevent, assess and manage cardio-metabolic risk, including clinical guidelines, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and patient-centred approaches
- increase coverage and quality of **cardio-metabolic management** following assessment so that those found to have a total CVD risk above threshold receive drug therapy and counselling (including glycaemic control) to prevent heart attacks and strokes
- improve the quality and coverage of secondary prevention and **rehabilitation following heart attacks and strokes**
- promote **early recognition of the symptoms and signs of a heart attack or stroke** in men and women and timely delivery of care along a critical pathway (the “chain of survival” or “chain of recovery”).

EHN notes that the Plan reports that **trade agreements**, which have been drawn up without adequate consideration of their health impact, risk unravelling hard-won gains. In order to balance trade/economic policy and nutrition/health policy, EHN suggests that, to safe-guard governments’ policy space to protect their citizens effectively not only from tobacco products but also from the harm caused by other products, **global instruments** for food and alcohol, like the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, should be explored.

***EHN calls on European Ministers of Health to:***

- ***endorse*** the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025)
- ***implement*** all its proposed actions effectively
- ***prioritise*** mandatory interventions over voluntary initiatives
- ***introduce*** plain packaging for tobacco products
- ***ensure*** that nutrition and health claims cannot be made on products that do not meet certain nutrient profiles, i.e. are high in fats, salt and sugar.

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*The European Heart Network (EHN) plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular diseases, in particular heart disease and stroke, through advocacy, networking, capacity-building and patient support, so that they are no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.*

*EHN is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation independent of political parties and economic interests.*

*EHN is fully-funded by its members, which are national heart foundations, and receives no funds from any industry.*