



fighting heart disease  
and stroke  
european heart network



MEP HEART GROUP FOR CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH WEEK  
“MIND YOUR HEART – FOR A HEART HEALTHY EUROPE”

## **MIND YOUR HEART: WHY CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH MATTERS**

5 NOVEMBER 2013 · 13h30 – 15h00  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS · ROOM ASP 3G1

### **Meeting Report**

Mrs Parvanova MEP, Co-chair of the MEP Heart Group welcomed the participants at the first of three MEP Heart Group meetings taking place in the European Parliament during the Mind your Heart week. This meeting focused on the huge burden of cardiovascular diseases and its impact on the daily life of EU citizens and on the economy.

Nick Townsend (British Heart Foundation Health promotion Research Group, Department of public health, University of Oxford) presented the European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics 2012, produced in the framework of the EuroHeart II project. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) causes annually over 4 million deaths in Europe (47% of all deaths) and over 1.9 million deaths in the EU (40% of all deaths). It causes 29% of all deaths before age 65 in Europe and 22% of all deaths before age 65 in the EU.

CVD remains the main cause of death in Europe, with very significant differences in mortality rates between countries. Low levels of physical activity and poor nutrition remain major concerns across Europe. Smoking is still a very important contributor to CVD. Strong action is needed to further address modifiable risk factors and to continue to strengthen treatment options, prevent avoidable death and reduce inequalities across the European Union. The considerable gaps in data and the lack of comparability of the data that is available in the EU need to be addressed to allow monitoring of CVD in the EU.

Ramon Luengo Fernandez (Health economics Research Centre, Department of Public Health University of Oxford) presented the cost of cardiovascular diseases in Europe: 196 billion Euro. Of the total cost, €106bn (54%) was spent on healthcare; €44bn (22%) in informal care costs; €27bn (14%) due to early mortality; and €19bn (10%) due to absence from work or early retirement.

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) and cerebrovascular diseases (stroke) combined account for 50% of CVD costs. The other 50% include other conditions such as: heart failure, renovascular disease and hypertension. The figures also show that there are great differences in what EU countries spend in CVD-related healthcare, both in terms of amount per citizen, and proportion of healthcare budget.

Michael Hübel (Head of Unit Health programme and diseases of the Health and Consumers Directorate General of the European Commission) congratulated the EHN and the ESC on the publishing of the cost of disease study, which the Commission finds really useful. Mr Hübel outlined the EU perspective on cardiovascular diseases, the opportunities and threats. He stressed that the unequal distributions of risk factors (i.e. differences in and between countries) need to be addressed at EU level. The European Commission is doing this via its work on the Tobacco Products Directive and on nutrition and physical activity as well as including child obesity, where an EU action plan is foreseen. The Commission also recognizes the important burden of chronic diseases and the co-morbidities between diseases (e.g. diabetes and CVD). The Commission supports the EU Health Ministers' work around the reflection process on chronic diseases and will continue to co-finance joint actions in the framework of the public health action programme.

In her concluding remarks, Linda McAvan MEP, co-chair of the MEP Heart Group, highlighted the need for independent information for the public at large, information that is not biased via corporate interests. People are entitled to this neutral information so that they can make their own lifestyle choices for themselves and their children. This is why we are all here today: to show that the EU must act on cardiovascular diseases and political priorities must be set to tackle the main cause of death in the EU. Adopting a strategy on cardiovascular health will allow all stakeholders involved to address the first cause of mortality in Europe in a comprehensive and consistent way.

Linda McAvan, MEP called on her colleagues in the European Parliament to commit to this strategy by signing the pledge for cardiovascular health. MEPs had the opportunity to have their picture with the pledge taken at the forum bar, as a sign of commitment to this strategy.