



fighting heart disease
and stroke
european heart network



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PRESS RELEASE: MEP Heart Group discusses how E-Health can transform the treatment and management of heart-related conditions

Brussels, 15 March 2011 - The **MEP Heart Group**, co-chaired by **Ms. Linda McAvan** MEP (S&D, UK) and **Mr. Dirk Sterckx** MEP (ALDE, BE), meets today in Brussels with an agenda focused on E-Health. This meeting, '**At the Heart of Innovation: E-Health under Scrutiny**', gives MEPs the opportunity to learn from experts how E-Health technologies are being successfully applied in cardiology. Known as **Tele-cardiology**, this approach has demonstrated positive outcomes in national programmes but, as the meeting will hear, there are some **obstacles** to overcome before it can be fully exploited to the benefit of all EU citizens.

E-Health is a term used to describe ICT-enabled services that can offer help in the **diagnosis and management** of many medical conditions such as **heart failure**.

It exploits modern information and communications techniques to bring a range of high quality services to patients, **regardless of location and proximity** to hospital facilities. This particularly applies to cardiovascular disease, for which E-Health technologies can help reduce unnecessary hospitalisations and may ensure more **rapid diagnosis and treatment**.

Commenting before the meeting, Mr. Sterckx and Ms. McAvan said, "We estimate that cardiovascular disease in Europe costs our healthcare systems a **staggering €200 billion per year**. Because the impact of the ageing population can only increase this, we have to find **innovative, sustainable and cost-effective** solutions to the treatment of such conditions. E-Health offers great potential to do so, and this is the reason why the MEP Heart Group is **gathering evidence from experts** at its meeting today."

In her presentation, **Ms Maria Iglesia-Gomez** of the European Commission (EC) will emphasise that E-Health is a key component of the innovation plan at the centre of the EC's **Europe 2020 strategy** to meet the needs of its ageing population. **Professor Martin Cowie** of the UK's Royal Brompton Hospital is presenting a summary of successful Tele-cardiology projects. His view is that **E-Health offers enormous benefits** to both patients and cardiologists.

"We have certainly seen a number of really interesting developments that emphasise its value as an integral part of treatment strategies", he notes.



"Remote monitoring can **empower patients to self-care** much more effectively, and reassures them that they have daily access to **expertise** from their own homes that can help them live **longer and better lives.**"

Medical professionals and policy makers alike understand how E-Health can help solve a number of fundamental problems, including:

- > Improving patients' **access to high quality, safe and efficient** healthcare services
- > Reducing **unnecessary hospital admissions**
- > Meeting the needs of an **ageing population**
- > Overcoming a **shortage in qualified medical** experts

Mr László Bencze, Health Attaché for the Hungarian Presidency, will tell MEPs that E-Health is a central theme of the **healthcare policy** established by his country during its Presidency. This will be debated in more detail at a **ministerial conference** due to be held in May in Budapest, which is expected to have a specific focus on the application of **E-Health solutions to chronic diseases.**

Great progress has been made in demonstrating the overall proof-of-concept of E-Health and a number of innovative programmes are in place in many EU countries. Despite this, however, significant **obstacles remain** before E-Health can be adopted as a mainstream process. In his presentation to the meeting, **Doctor Friedrich Köhler**, Professor of Telemedicine at Charité-Universitätsmedizin in Berlin will warn that those obstacles **cannot be ignored.**

"E-Health will only happen when **adequate investment** is made available, yet we are living in an era of reduced spend on healthcare," he said. "Successful delivery of E-Health needs an extensive - and expensive - **broadband** network characterised by **high security and resilience.** We must also establish **EU-wide training** for healthcare professionals, correctly manage patient expectations, ensure **data protection** and confidentiality, and quickly introduce **new processes** for procurement and standards."

The MEP Heart Group will emphasise its belief in the **potential of E-Health.** For this reason, it will underline the need to **provide funding** to continue research into studies of long-term benefits, the adoption of standards, technical interoperability, and preventive and predictive care.

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Notes to editors:

About the MEP Heart Group

The main objective of the **MEP Heart Group** is to promote measures that will help reduce the burden of CVD in the European Union and to raise awareness of the disease among target audiences by a series of dedicated activities. The MEP Heart Group is led by two Co-Chairs, Linda McAvan, MEP and Dick Sterckx, MEP. The European Heart Network and the European Society of Cardiology provide support to the MEP Heart Group by running its secretariat.

About the European Society of Cardiology

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) represents more than 68,000 cardiology professionals across Europe and the Mediterranean. Its mission is to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe.

About the European Heart Network

The European Heart Network (EHN) is a Brussels-based alliance of heart foundations and like-minded non-governmental organisations throughout Europe. EHN has member organisations in 26 countries. EHN plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular diseases, in particular heart disease and stroke, through advocacy, networking, education and patient support, so that they are no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.