

Towards an EU Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs)

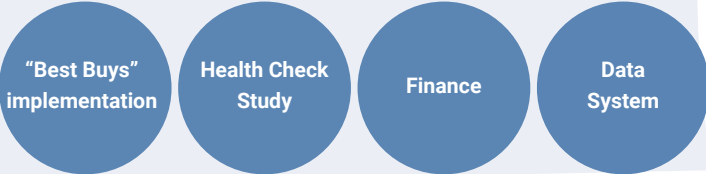
With 70% of the EU citizens wanting to see more European Union (EU) action on health according to a recent Eurobarometer and with epidemic levels of NCDs undermining people's well-being, healthcare systems, and Europe's economic and social prosperity, preventing NCDs should be a main priority for the European Commission.

A joint paper by the European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and the NCD Alliance calls for the creation of an **EU Strategic Framework for the Prevention of NCDs** towards 2030.

The paper proposes basic principles, priorities and actions for such an EU strategic framework, setting out a roadmap for policy-makers to make change happen.

EU Strategic Framework for the Prevention of NCDs

Enable and facilitate action to tackle NCDs



Establish synergies with other policy areas



Priorities



Basis



Action 1: Support the implementation of WHO 'Best Buys'

DELIVERABLES:

- > A set of **technical toolkits** setting out different design options for the national implementation of each of the policy measures included in the WHO 'best buys', tailored to the EU context.
- > A list of **'impact indicators'** that Member States can use to support progress monitoring.
- > A **mechanism** for periodically analysing gaps in NCD policy at EU level and initiating legislative procedures where needed, possible and appropriate.
- > A **risk assessment** on the occurrence of conflicts of interest across EU institutions and an action plan with measures to prevent undue influence by vested interests over policy-making processes.

Action 2: Conduct a 'health check' study to identify EU barriers to the implementation of national NCD prevention policies

DELIVERABLES:

- > A comprehensive **legal 'health check' inventory** of EU and international barriers to the implementation of effective NCD prevention policies at national and local levels.
- > An **action plan** to alleviate these barriers or guidance for designing national NCD prevention policies in a way to enhance their chance to be upheld under legal scrutiny.

Action 3: Design EU financial instruments to support national investment in prevention programmes and measures

DELIVERABLES:

- > A **cross-sectoral expert group on Financing for Health**, which will assess and propose different options to enhance societal returns on investment by increasing programmes to fund NCD prevention.

Action 4: Elaborate a pan-European system for data collection, policy evaluation and accountability

DELIVERABLES:

- > An **EU-wide system for health data collection and information sharing** containing registries for key NCD indicators.
- > An **extensive study** putting forward methodologies for new health policy evaluation tools.
- > A process of **'shadow reporting'** where civil society can contribute with their assessments on the progress made towards fulfilling NCD-related commitments.
- > An **assessment** of how health systems can better address primary prevention.
- > An **evaluation of the added value of past research funding** and possible a proposal for ex-ante conditionalities in the area of health-relevant projects and funding.

Action 5: Ensure inter-institutional coordination on health and well-being and a policy home for health within the European Commission structure

DELIVERABLES:

- > A new **EU high-level coordination mandate**, such as a European Commission vice-president, that will ensure inter- and intra-institutional policy coordination for health and well-being.

Action 6: Launch a 'Health in All Policies' online policy portal

DELIVERABLES:

- > A **'Health in All Policies' online policy portal**, which should:
 - > Present an overview of ongoing, health relevant initiatives in all policy areas;
 - > Publish the results of all health impact assessments and provide the opportunity for continuous improvements in methodology;
 - > Monitor national implementation of health-related policies to promote better compliance with EU health-related policies;
 - > An updated methodology for health impact assessment and a process for regular updates to the methodology.
- > An **analysis of compliance** with a select number of key policy files, in particular those related to the national implementation of policies focused on children and youth.

Action 7: Pursue 'EU flagship initiatives' in areas that can deliver co-benefits for NCD prevention and other SDGs

DELIVERABLES:

- > A series of **action plans to pursue EU 'flagship initiatives'** in areas where clear co-benefits can be achieved between NCD prevention and other policy areas.

Why an EU Strategic Framework for the Prevention of NCDs?

NCDs are a major health issue of the 21st century. **Over 85% of all deaths** and 75% of all diseases in Europe are attributable to NCDs.

The right to health is a fundamental right of every human being. Health and social security are the second most important national concerns across Europe, according to recent EU surveys.

Today, approximately **one third of the EU population aged 15 and over**, and nearly a quarter of the working age population lives with a chronic disease.

€700 billion is spent on treating NCDs in the EU annually.

More than half a million people under the age of 65 die of NCDs in the EU each year.

Premature mortality from NCDs results in a loss of €115 billion per year to the economy, or 0.8% of EU GDP.

While progress is made on reducing premature mortality from NCDs, longer lives do not necessarily translate into healthy lives. On average, women in the EU spend almost a quarter (23%) of their lives in ill health; for men this figure is almost a fifth (19%).

Work-related annual direct costs of NCDs to the European economy add up to €610 billion per year, including costs to employers, lost economic output and costs to social welfare systems.

Many chronic diseases are to a considerable degree preventable. It is estimated that at least 80% of all heart disease, stroke and diabetes, and 40% of cancer could be prevented.

Public health prevention policies are a high-yielding public investment.

The median rate of return on investment for public health interventions is 1 to 14, meaning that every Euro invested in public health gives an average return of €14 to the economy.

Over 1.8 million lives of people between the ages of 30 and 70 could be saved in the EU by 2025 if only the World Health Organization 'best buys' for NCD prevention are implemented.

The EU's main aims are to promote "peace", "its values" and "the well-being of its peoples". The EU has wide soft law powers to act for health promotion, a duty to mainstream health in all policies and extensive powers to ensure the functioning of the internal market based on a high level of human health protection.

[*References available in the full paper](#)



Co-funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union

The European Public Health Alliance has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020). The content of this publication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

MAY 2019