# 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.

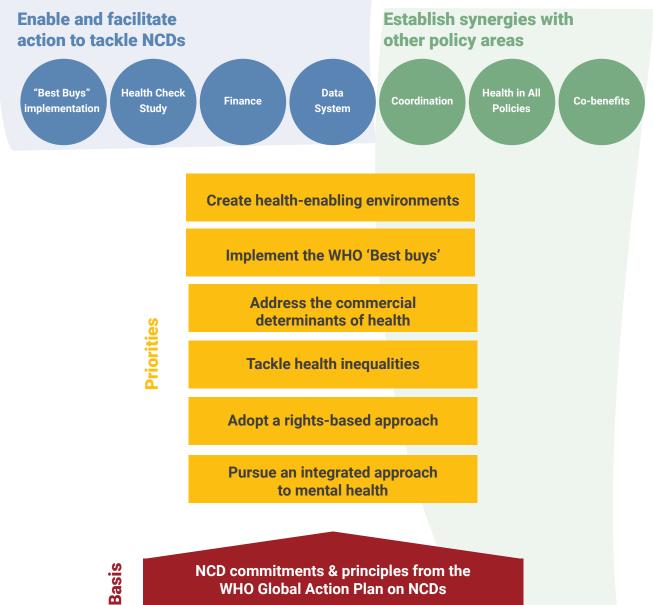
The paper proposes basic principles, priorities and actions for such an EU strategic framework, setting out a roadmap for policy-makers to make change happen.







# **EU Strategic Framework for** the Prevention of NCDs



### 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 healthrelated 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  $\leq 14$  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



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