

Taking the pulse: A Cardiovascular Health Plan for Europe

17 November 2022, 15:00-17:00 CET
European Parliament, Paul Henri Spaak Building, Room P3C050

Event report: Taking the pulse: A Cardiovascular Health plan for Europe

Prepared for EACH Partners - for internal dissemination only

November 2022

Overview

On 17 November 2022, the **European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health (EACH)** held a first ever event in the European Parliament to discuss how the European Union (EU) can develop a plan for better cardiovascular health. The event was hosted by **Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Tomislav Sokol (Christian Democrats, Croatia)**, and endorsed by the MEP Heart Group, a key interest group bringing together Members of European Parliament that are invested in tackling the burden of cardiovascular disease.

The event featured speeches and interventions by patients, the European Heart Network President on behalf of EACH, 6 Members of European Parliament, WHO Europe, the Spanish Ministry of Health, and experts in cardiovascular health policy.

The event was held in hybrid format with a diverse audience joining in the European Parliament as well as online. The event showed the value of the EACH community to join forces and advocate for the common Cardiovascular Health cause.

Social media engagement

The official hashtag used for the event was #EUCVHealthPlan2024 #CVHealthMatters, and #BeatCVD. Participants and speakers engaged on sharing pictures and comments on the event over Twitter and LinkedIn. Below, we have included some examples of content published during the event on social media.

Why the event

Bringing together 17 organisations with a common interest to advocate for a dedicated EU Cardiovascular Health (CVH) Plan, since its launch in September 2021, EACH worked hard to develop a mission and vision on what such a plan should look like.

In May 2021, the EACH Vision was then launched and presented at an online event. After this event, partners agreed to engage with EU institutions to bring the concept of a CV Health Plan to the attention of policymakers and decision-makers.

Within these EU institutions, the European Parliament is a critical stakeholder that can increase political pressure on the European Commission as well as Member States to act on CV Health.

The event intended to be a **first key step to gain support** from various Members of European Parliament to act on CV Health and to call upon the European Commission and Member States to support an EU CV Plan, showcasing that **cardiovascular health has a place in all EU policies**. The objective of EACH would be to translate such European Parliament support in a **Motion for a Resolution in 2023**. This is a key instrument that the European Parliament has at its disposal.

Key take-aways

The discussion provided action points to be considered by EACH in the coming months, including:

- ❖ The need for better coordination on Cardiovascular Health at the European level, **prioritising it in all areas** through multidisciplinary cooperation, by making Cardiovascular Health a **priority for the upcoming parliamentary term**.
- ❖ An urgent need to develop a **comprehensive EU Cardiovascular Health Plan** that sets concrete legislative proposals, timelines, and funding, **using the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** as an example to develop successful action on Cardiovascular Health
- ❖ **Such as EU Cardiovascular Health Plan should be comprehensive**, starting at prevention, but also tackling early detection, improved access, and rehabilitation as well as quality of life.

Interventions

Welcoming remarks

Tomislav Sokol MEP (EPP, Croatia)

MEP Sokol highlighted that the opportunities presented by the pandemic of tackling health problems collaboratively at the EU level should not be dismissed or forgotten when considering other pressing issues at the European level. He mentioned that although there are some actions being taken already, more needs to be done. Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP) can be used as an example for developing a structured EU Cardiovascular Health Plan that includes well-defined legislative proposals, benchmarks, timelines, and funding.

EACH patient testimonials

Stefanie Lubstein (Deutsche Herzstiftung, Germany), Indy Bangma (FH Europe, the Netherlands)

The patients shared their touching testimonials on living with cardiovascular disease (CVD), emphasising the impact of their condition on their personal lives. The importance of early detection was stressed, highlighting its determinant role in patients' quality of life, proximity to normalisation and better future health outcomes and treatment options. A call for better coordination at a European level was made, highlighting the need to improve and make multi-disciplinary and cross-border care more accessible, namely through better management of electronic health records, and to develop a European cardiovascular strategy or guideline that considers diverse types of CVD patients.

The need and ambition for a Cardiovascular Health Plan in Europe

Dr Charmaine Griffiths (President of the European Heart Network, currently EACH Secretariat)

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the field of cardiovascular health was discussed, namely the known delays in diagnosis, declines in CVD detection and statistics predicting a rise in CVDs. Dr Griffiths stressed that to address these issues, a coherent and structured approach to tackle CVD is needed at the EU level, agreeing that EBCP is the perfect example. She closed by calling on the European Parliament to prioritise CVH in all areas, raising the need for action at the political level and stressing the cost-effectiveness of investing in CVH.

Panel discussion 1: Cardiovascular Health is everywhere

MEP Brando Benifei (Co-chair MEP Heart Group), MEP Antonius Manders (EPP, Netherlands), MEP Vlad-Marius Botoş (Renew Europe, Romania), MEP Radka Maxova (S&D, Czech Republic), MEP Tomas Zdechovsky (EPP, Czech Republic)

The Members of European Parliament provided an overview of the impact and importance of cardiovascular health at a European level, emphasising the need to shift the focus to prevention, raising awareness around CVD risk factors and determinants, and promoting healthy lifestyles/aging, improved screening and detection, as well as to improved access to treatment and care.

The burden of CVD was also addressed, impacting society and the economy, but also unequally impacting regions, genders, and socio-economic status.

Overall, the Members of European Parliament agreed that this area requires strategic and tailored approaches over different areas of work and that strengthened cooperation is needed to mobilise enough efforts to materialise this, making it a priority for the 2024 mandate.

Panel discussion 2: CV health as a policy priority for Member States

Dr Nino Berdzuli (Director, Country Health Programmes, WHO Regional Office for Europe), Prof. Hector Bueno (Scientific Coordinator of the National Strategy on Cardiovascular Health of Spain's National Health System), Prof. Paul Dendale (President, European Association of Prevention Cardiology)

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was discussed during this panel discussion, highlighting the exposed fragilities of health care systems and health inequalities. Overall, interventions highlighted the importance of primary and secondary prevention, stressing that although individual responsibility is important, there is a lot of action that can be taken at the EU and national levels.

The fact that several Member States still lack dedicated policy strategies, or even national prevention programmes, was stressed. An overview of the recently implemented Spanish National Strategy for Cardiovascular Health was presented by Dr Bueno. Panellists emphasised the importance of education for prevention, that must be aimed at both the population and the healthcare professionals, and the aim to plan cities towards prevention, with healthy mobility options and food solutions.

Closing Remarks

MEP Tomislav Sokol (EPP, Croatia)

As a closing remark, MEP Sokol highlighted that CVD prevention is the most cost-effective way of investing in CVD. He reinforced that cooperation between stakeholders is essential, and that the momentum generated by the pandemic should be kept, pledging his support in making this a priority for the next parliamentary term through a Motion for a Resolution.

Next steps for EACH

- The event marked an important milestone in raising visibility of EACH and enabled to garner political momentum at European Parliament level.
- EACH will now leverage the political support from attending Members of European Parliament as well as the MEP Interest Group to expand political support from additional Members of European Parliament, with a view to align them around a Motion for a Resolution in view of the forthcoming European Parliament elections.
- In this perspective, EACH partners and members will be strongly encouraged to accelerate engagement with Members of European Parliament from their countries.
- Dedicated follow-up webinars and briefings on this action will be shared in the coming weeks.

Snapshot of social media posts

Tomislav Sokol @TomislavSokol · Nov 17
 Proud to host "Taking the Pulse: A Cardiovascular Health Plan for Europe" today at @Europarl_EN organised with the EU Alliance for Cardiovascular Health #EACH. It is clear, EU needs a comprehensive plan that promotes #CVHealth for all.
 #CVHealthMatters #BeatCVD



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Vlad Botoș @botos_vlad
 I attended today as a speaker at the European Parliament in Brussels, an event dedicated to the need to draw up a plan for heart health, for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases.



4:51 PM · Nov 17, 2022 · Twitter for Android
 2 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 11 Likes

István Ujhelyi @istvan_ujhelyi
 Improving #cardiovascular health is the best way of making people and families across #Europe more resilient to future health threats.
 This is why, I am committed in making a European Cardiovascular Health Plan a reality!



BeatCVD #EUCVHealthPlan2024 #HealthUnion
 1:01 PM · Nov 17, 2022 · Twitter Web App
 0 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 18 Likes

Radka Maxová @MaxovaRadka · Nov 17
 Bold #policies that address the myriad gender, social and lifestyle issues are needed to reduce the burden of #CVD in #women. Please join me in calling on the @EU_Commission to make an EU Cardiovascular Health Plan a priority for the 2024 mandate.



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Toine Manders @ToineMandersEP · 17 nov.
 Gesproken tijdens event in EP "A Cardiovascular Health Plan for Europe". Het is van belang dat we een EU-aanpak ontwikkelen om #hartfalen via gezonde leefstijl zo veel mogelijk te voorkomen!



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Nina Berdzuli @NinaBerdzuli · 18 nov.
 @ehnhheart There is much we can do to help bring down CVD burden in European Region. Stepping up political will and support to Cardiovascular Health Plan is vital! Looking forward to working closely on this important initiative.

European Heart Network (EHN) @ehnhheart · 17 nov.
 @WHO_Europe Nina Berdzuli joins virtually at @Europarl_EN saying it is our moral imperative to address the burden of #CVD.
 Improving #CVHealth via prevention & early detection & intervention is the best way to make Europe more resilient to future health threats. #CVHealthMatters



European Society of Cardiology Advocacy @ESCAAdvocacy · Nov 17
 The added value created by the EU is needed if we are to fight #heart. support the efforts in the motion for a resolution for the EU Parliament calling on the @EU_Commission to make the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan a priority for 2024. @TomislavSokol

European Heart Network (EHN) @ehnhheart
 Primary prevention should be the EU's primary focus for tackling #CVD. @ToineMandersEP describes the economic & social benefits of this approach & the obstacles of making this a reality.
 We know how, join our call bit.ly/3Ee7clc #CVHealthMatters #EUCVHealthPlan2024

FH Europe - The European FH Patient Network @fhpatienteu... · Nov 17
 If testing for prostate cancer in men at a certain age, breast cancer in women, eyesight in toddlers is a routine...why is #screening and #testing for #cardiovascular #disease risk factors not a routine, despite #CVD being no. 1 killer in Europe and the world! #EUCVHealthPlan2024



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AIM @AIM_Healthcare · Nov 17
 @TomislavSokol calls for an EU Plan on Cardiovascular Diseases, like the EU Cancer Plan, with concrete:

- 1 Objectives
- 2 Benchmarks
- 3 Targets
- 4 Budget

#EUCVHealthPlan2024 #BeatCVD



EPP Group and 2 others
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