

27 organisations unite to demand a future-proof strategy for heart failure

New statement urges EU institutions to act now to protect citizens, health systems and economies

Brussels, 7 September 2021 – In the *Action Statement on Heart Failure*, launched today, the [Heart Failure Policy Network \(HFPN\)](#) urges the EU to take concrete action on heart failure – the biggest cause of preventable hospitalisations in the EU.

Billy Kelleher MEP, Member of Renew Europe Group and the MEP Heart Group, said: ‘Heart failure has been a forgotten syndrome for far too long.’ Mr Kelleher, who has been working closely with the HFPN, believes the EU has a vital strategic role in supporting Member States to address the growing burden of heart failure. ‘As a union, we must come together and rise to this challenge to protect the health and wellbeing of our citizens,’ he said.

The *Action Statement on Heart Failure* makes detailed recommendations for the three main institutions of the EU, linking to existing and forthcoming programmes such as EU4Health and Digital Europe. It has been backed by 27 patient organisations, centres of excellence, professional societies and heart failure working groups across Europe.

Heart failure is a major contributor to the burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD) – the leading cause of death in the EU, far exceeding other conditions such as cancer and respiratory disease. Experts estimate that heart failure generates an annual cost of more than €29 billion across Member States. One in five people can expect to be diagnosed with the syndrome at some point in their lives. Despite this, the EU has yet to develop and implement a formal plan to tackle heart failure and CVD.

The action statement calls on the EU to provide political, strategic and financial support to Member States in building capacity, sharing information, leading world-class innovative research and delivering best-practice heart failure care. Action on heart failure is essential if Member States are to keep people well and out of hospital, tackle healthcare backlogs from the COVID-19 pandemic and build health systems that are resilient to future crises.

‘It is of serious concern that most European countries and the EU have no clear vision or strategy on how to reduce the leading cause of preventable hospitalisations’, said Ed Harding, HFPN Network Director. ‘The EU can play a huge role in accelerating improvement efforts and galvanising political will. If we do not improve on the systemic failures that characterise the past decade of CVD prevention and management, heart failure and other cardiovascular conditions will continue to stretch our health systems and economies to their limits well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.’

To download the action statement, visit: www.hfpolicynetwork.org/project/action-statement-on-heart-failure.

Notes to editors:

There are several actions that EU institutions should commit to so that the vision of the *Action Statement on Heart Failure* can be realised.

The **European Commission** should:

- incorporate heart failure into its efforts to help Member States meet international targets on non-communicable diseases, including knowledge sharing, funding research and supporting prevention and best-practice care
- consider heart failure initiatives for EU funding to support Member States in increasing awareness of heart failure, preventing the syndrome, training a heart failure specialist workforce and investing in multidisciplinary and integrated care
- ensure heart failure is considered in EU initiatives such as the European Health Data Space and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
- develop and propose a concrete EU-level Action Plan on Cardiovascular Disease.

The **Council of the European Union** should:

- prioritise heart failure in upcoming EU Presidency agendas.

The **European Parliament** should:

- propose and draft its own report on heart failure
- consider heart failure, and CVD more broadly, in relevant Parliament reports on mental and physical health.

About heart failure

Heart failure occurs when the heart becomes too weak or stiff to pump enough blood around the body. This results in symptoms such as extreme fatigue, breathlessness and fluid retention. Heart failure disproportionately affects older people, with more than 80% of cases diagnosed in people aged 65 and over.

About the HFPN

The Heart Failure Policy Network is an independent, multidisciplinary network of healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, policymakers and other stakeholders from across Europe. It was established in 2015 with the goal of raising awareness of unmet needs and seeking meaningful improvements in heart failure policy and care. To view our work so far, please visit: www.hfpolicynetwork.org

The Network is made possible with financial support from AstraZeneca, Vifor Pharma and Novartis Pharma. The content produced by the Network is not biased to any specific treatment or therapy. All outputs are guided and endorsed by the Network's members. All members provide their time for free.

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