



EU-funded project sheds light on cardiovascular diseases

Brussels, 28 February 2014: The EU-funded EuroHeart (European Heart Health Strategy) II Project comes to an end today after three years of research into current cardiovascular disease (CVD) trends and analysis of EU-wide CVD prevention policies. Developed and implemented by the European Heart Network (EHN) together with 29 partner organisations from 17 countries, including academia, research centres, NGOs and health professionals - namely the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) - the project identified best practices and policy initiatives for the promotion of cardiovascular health in Europe.

Following up on its predecessor, EuroHeart I (2003 – 2008), EuroHeart II demonstrated the continuing high burden of CVD, which remains the N°1 killer in Europe. Indeed, the 2012 European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics, elaborated by Oxford University within the project, indicate that 1.9 million people die from CVD in the EU yearly and 4 million in Europe overall. The statistics also reveal an increase in the overall financial burden of CVD, estimated to cost the EU economy over € 196 billion annually.

The project reveals that Europe is facing a leveling out of previously decreasing mortality rates in certain population groups in several EU countries. Combined with increases in obesity and diabetes and plateauing of decreases in blood pressure and blood cholesterol, this confirms the imperative for policymakers to act now in order to avoid that the decline in CVD mortality observed over many years is reversed.

But the project also sheds light on the tremendous scope for reducing CVD. According to EuroHeart II, reductions in cardiovascular risk factors at population level, such as dietary salt, saturated fat and tobacco could reduce coronary heart disease (CHD) mortality substantially by up to one third in each country. Yet, adoption, implementation and evaluation of effective policies remain patchy and variable.

A European conference, followed by three regional conferences were organised in Germany, Italy and Slovakia to inform a wider stakeholder base of the evidence on food, nutrition and physical activity and their impact on CVD and the policies needed to change current patterns. These were followed by seven national meetings where policy recommendations were reviewed by representatives of health organisations, nutritionists, physical activity experts, representatives from national ministries, etc. Patients were equally involved through capacity-building seminars.

Reviewing the work pursued within the framework of EuroHeart II, Ms Susanne Løgstrup, Director of EHN said: “The outcomes of the project will contribute significantly to the European Union’s health programme ‘Together for Health’. If acted upon, the research findings and their accompanying policy recommendations have the potential to reduce the burden of cardiovascular diseases in Europe and, thus, help achieve the global target to reduce mortality from chronic non-communicable diseases by 25% by 2025.”

Expressing his appreciation for the work conducted within the framework of EuroHeart II, Professor Frans Van de Werf, Chairman of the ESC European Affairs Committee, concluded: “EuroHeart II is a new milestone in the fight against cardiovascular disease. It brings additional and concrete evidence for the need of EU-wide policy actions for CVD prevention. We trust that the European Commission will build on the outcomes of the project, namely to design a dedicated EU strategy for CVD.”

ENDS

Notes to editor

About EuroHeart II

More information and material is available here <http://www.ehnheart.org/euroheart-ii.html> and here <http://www.escardio.org/about/what/advocacy/EuroHeart/Pages/EHII.aspx>

The EuroHeart II project received co-funding from the European Union in the framework of the Health programme. The sole responsibility for the content of any publications made in the framework of this project lies with the author(s). The Consumers, Health and Food Executive is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein

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 24 countries. EHN plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular diseases, in particular heart disease and stroke, through advocacy, networking, capacity building and patient support, so that they are no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.

About the European Society of Cardiology

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) represents more than 80 000 cardiology professionals across Europe and the Mediterranean. Its mission is to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe.