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## **Tobacco breaks hearts: World No Tobacco Day event at the European Parliament reminds of tobacco's preventable toll, calls for action to prevent and reduce it**

Brussels, 6 June 2018 – Tobacco use is an important risk factor for the development of coronary heart disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease. Despite the known harms of tobacco to heart health, and the availability of solutions to reduce related death and disease, awareness is low.

To raise awareness and call for action, a Roundtable **hosted by Cristian Silviu BUSOI, MEP** was organised in the European Parliament by the European Heart Network (EHN) and Smoke Free Partnership (SFP), with support from the World Heart Federation, the European Society of Cardiology, and the European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention.

Participants at the Roundtable on Tobacco and Cardiovascular disease today included Members of the European Parliament, parliamentary assistants, public health advocates and experts at EU, global and national level. Speakers included **Luminita Hayes, Senior Advisor at the World Health Organization EU office, Thea Emmerling, Head of Unit for Health in all policies, global health, and tobacco control at the European Commission, and Rutger Haandrikman, Team Manager Public Affairs, Dutch Heart Foundation** who spoke about the national advocacy towards tobacco free banks in the Netherlands.

Three of the recipients of the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day Award in the Euro region were recognised at the event. **The British Heart Foundation** was recognised for its contribution to plain packaging in the UK and its steadfast support to the national tobacco control advocacy. **The Advocacy Center "Life" from Ukraine** was recognised for its advocacy for tobacco control legislation and its contribution to the decrease in tobacco use by 25% in Ukraine over the past decade. **Susanne Logstrup, Director of EHN**, was recognised for her work in raising awareness of tobacco and cardiovascular diseases, and her advocacy for a strong EU Tobacco Products Directive.

Discussions focused on the theme of World No Tobacco Day 2018 – heart disease and stroke. Tobacco use is the second leading cause of cardiovascular diseases, after high blood pressure and contributes to approximately 17% of all heart disease deaths. Tobacco control policies to prevent and reduce tobacco use have a direct contribution to reducing the burden of tobacco-related heart diseases.



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**John Maingay, representing the BHF**, said: *“The BHF has been at the forefront of anti-smoking campaigning since its inception in 1961 so we are delighted and honoured to receive this award. The UK - particularly Scotland - led the way in creating smoke-free environments, which has been shown to reduce overall harm from smoking. But there is still a long way to go. With smoking rates as high as 50% amongst men in some parts of Europe, tobacco remains a major risk factor for early death from heart and circulatory diseases. We are immensely grateful to the work of the Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) bodies in England, Wales and Scotland for their relentless drive towards a smoke-free UK. Their expertise, dedication and resolve remain nothing short of inspirational.”*

**Lilia Olefir, Executive Director of the Advocacy Center “Life” - Ukraine**, said: *“67% of deaths in Ukraine are related to cardiovascular diseases, and smoking is one of the main causes of CVD. It is necessary to make tobacco products unattractive for young people to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Ukraine. Kids and youth should have a right not to be targeted by the tobacco industry”*.

**Susanne Logstrup, Director of EHN and President of SFP**, called for a factual approach to tobacco control. She said: *“Tobacco use is very harmful to health – it causes heart disease and stroke as well as a great many other life-threatening diseases. It is the duty of the EU and its Member States to protect their citizens from the harm caused by these products.”*

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi, MEP**, said: *We can’t be complacent in fighting tobacco use. We have to keep up the efforts, and support countries in doing better. Countries in Europe now develop smokefree generation policies, designed to allow children to grow up free of tobacco. I hope that all my colleagues in the EP will help support these policies so that the next generation can grow up not only in a tobacco free country, but in a tobacco free Europe.*

**Luminita Hayes, Senior Officer at the WHO EU Office**, said: *Business as usual is not enough. Despite some progress in recent years in some areas of Europe, tobacco use has remained relatively stable in the last four years. Member States have committed to reducing tobacco use by 30% by 2025. Without a renewed, whole-of-government effort to adopt and implement effective tobacco control measures, this target will not be achieved.*

Speakers and participants at the meeting called for stronger policy action on tobacco in order to prevent cardiovascular diseases. Policies include strong smoke free policies, the implementation of plain packaging and advertising restrictions at national level. Participants also called on the EU and its Member States to review the Tobacco Tax Directive towards an increase of excise duty levels to reduce the affordability of tobacco products especially for young people.

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