

STATEMENT

76th WHO Regional Committee for Europe: Toward a strategy and action plan for tackling non-communicable diseases and advancing well-being through health promotion in the WHO European Region 2028-2037

29 OCTOBER, COPENHAGEN – IFPMA and EFPIA welcome the document “Toward a strategy and action plan for tackling noncommunicable diseases and advancing well-being through health promotion in the WHO European Region 2028-2037.”

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and Alzheimer’s, account for 88-90% of all deaths in Europe, and almost one in three people over 50 are living with two or more chronic conditions. They place a heavy cost on European societies in terms of expensive hospital and long-term care, reduced labor force participation, and sickness and disability benefits. Five major NCDs are estimated to cost EU countries €530 billion annually, which is more than 3% of the EU’s combined annual GDP. This is not even accounting for the “invisible” burden of informal care, which for Alzheimer’s alone was estimated to cost over \$200 billion for the European region in 2019.

This is not only a public health issue – it is a macroeconomic and resilience challenge. Without structural reform, rising chronic disease prevalence will further constrain labor participation, productivity, and fiscal sustainability. Conversely, healthier longevity can significantly moderate long-term public expenditure growth.

We would like to highlight four important pillars for a European strategy to tackling NCD’s in Europe.

1. Pivot to prevention

Up to 60% of NCDs are preventable. Europe must scale evidence-based screening programs, reduce the high burden of undiagnosed disease, and expand adult immunization. Earlier diagnosis dramatically improves survival and reduces treatment costs. Secondary prevention – including risk-factor management and treat-to-target strategies – can prevent avoidable hospitalizations and premature deaths.

2. Deliver a continuum of care

Hospital-centric models are not sustainable for chronic, multimorbid populations. Investment in strong primary care, multidisciplinary integrated care models, and standardized patient pathways is essential. Clear outcome targets – including patient reported outcomes – and value-based financing frameworks should replace volume-driven incentives to improve disease control and system efficiency.

3. Bring innovation to patients

Europe must maintain a competitive and predictable research, regulatory, and intellectual property framework to incentivize investment in medicines, diagnostics, and digital health. At the same time, structural and budgetary barriers to timely and equitable access across Member States must be addressed. Precision medicine, advanced therapies, and next-generation prevention tools can significantly reduce long-term disease burden if implemented effectively.

4. Accelerate digital transformation

Digital health technologies, AI-enabled diagnostics, remote monitoring, and interoperable health data systems can reduce inefficiencies, improve care coordination, and alleviate workforce shortages. The implementation of the European Health Data Space is central to enabling data-driven prevention, research, and care integration.

IFPMA and EFPIA are ready to work with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, Member States, and all stakeholders in the development of the NCD Strategy.