

WHF Statement on Agenda Item 5(d): Strengthening Member State collaboration on improving access to medicines in the WHO European Region

Honourable chair, distinguished delegates,

The World Heart Federation welcomes the inclusion of access to medicines as a cross-cutting issue on the WHO EURO health agenda, and we praise the Committee's report for its recommendations for collaboration and partnership.

The report notes the centrality of access to medicines for strategies on non-communicable diseases (or NCDs). This is especially true for cardiovascular disease (or CVD).

CVD is the leading cause of death in Europe and Central Asia, despite the fact that 80% of premature heart disease and stroke is preventable.¹ Due to changing epidemiological patterns, and increasing prevalence of risk factors such as childhood obesity² and physical inactivity among young people,³ this high burden is likely to continue.

An affordable supply of medicines is vital to the management of chronic diseases such as CVD to avoid catastrophic out-of-pocket payments for patients, and we encourage governments to prioritize cardiovascular medicines based upon need and burden of disease.

Though there are challenges in securing reliable access to essential medicines, they are surmountable through collaboration and innovative solutions. To support the recommendations in the report, we suggest the following actions:

1. **Increase funding for essential cardiovascular medicines within national health budgets**, especially those included as 'best buys' in the updated Appendix 3.
2. **Continue to invest in robust health information systems to monitor and report the burden of CVD at the national level**, in order to match supply of essential medicines with demand.
3. **Work with all stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry as appropriate**, to achieve fair pricing and increase manufacturing capacity of generic essential medicines.
4. **Establish and sustain pooled procurement mechanisms for NCD medicines**. This approach has proved effective in securing affordable and high-quality medicines both within the EURO Region and in other WHO regions.⁴

We reaffirm our commitment to collaborating with WHO EURO Member States and all stakeholders to support access to cardiovascular medicines. Thank you.

¹ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/cardiovascular-diseases/data-and-statistics>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/obesity/data-and-statistics>

³ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/data-and-statistics/10-key-facts-on-physical-activity-in-the-who-european-region>

⁴ http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12163%3Aapaho-strategic-fund&catid=8775%3Aabout&Itemid=42005&lang=en