

The Role of Public Health Organisations – Nutrition and Heart Health

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ABSTRACT

In Europe, 4 million people die every year from cardiovascular diseases (CVD). It has been estimated that about one third of CVD deaths are caused by nutritional factors and inactive lifestyles. This is why the European Heart Network* (EHN) gives a high priority to nutrition and physical activity in its work.

The role of the EHN and its member organisations in the promotion of good nutrition and a healthy diets include:

- informing and educating the population and segments hereof about the relation between diet and CVD and what a balanced and healthy diet looks like
- stimulating concerted action at both national and international in order to develop and/or implement food and nutrition policies, including quantified dietary goals

At national level, the members of the EHN carry out information campaigns, work with the food industry to provide healthier options, work in alliances to achieve consensus on policies needed to improve the dietary health of the populations, work with restaurants to improve recipes and low-fat preparation of meals, design and participate in school programmes, etc.

At European level, EHN has called for a comprehensive and integrated food and nutrition policy for Europe since the publication of its paper *Food, Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in the European Union* in 1998. EHN has since published an updated paper *Food, Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in the European Region: Challenges for the New Millennium* in 2002. EHN was represented in the Eurodiet project. EHN has adopted a position paper on nutrition and health claims in 2001.

At an international level, EHN took part in the official consultation process for the WHO report *Diet, Nutrition and the prevention of Chronic Diseases* published in Spring 2003 and is involved in the WHO process for a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

* The European Heart Network is a Brussels-based alliance linking heart foundations and other non-governmental organisations committed to the prevention of cardiovascular disease in 25 countries across Europe. EHN's mission is to play a leading role through networking, collaboration and advocacy in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular disease so that it will no longer be a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe.