



United to reverse the rise in chronic disease



Open letter to European Commission President Juncker

Brussels, 12 June 2015

Subject: EU Approach on Chronic Diseases

Dear President Juncker,

On behalf of the European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA), I am writing to you to express our deep concern about recent developments in policies that have an impact on chronic diseases in Europe.

At the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF) meeting of 18 May, Commissioner Andriukaitis publicly stated that the European Commission has chosen not to present a new, dedicated, EU alcohol strategy despite numerous calls for such by Member States, the European Parliament and health stakeholders including ECDA¹. The Commissioner indicated that the European Commission is working instead on an 'EU approach on chronic diseases', which may include a segment on alcohol.

Whereas we certainly welcome a wide strategy on chronic diseases, we fear that prevention and reduction of alcohol abuse will not be granted the necessary attention considering the significant burden caused in terms of chronic diseases as well as the massive cost to the EU. Indeed, harmful alcohol consumption, for which Europe is the world leader, is known to cost the EU economy between €125 billion and €155 billion in tangible costs each year². These costs include the treatment of alcohol-related disease, lost working time and productivity, and social costs including welfare payments and law enforcement.

We are also concerned that there has been little engagement with the health community on the development of a wider strategy on chronic diseases, since the European Chronic Disease Summit, which took place last year. Certainly, the ECDA would welcome closer involvement in the EU approach on chronic diseases.

¹ *Don't bottle out – why the EU needs a comprehensive alcohol strategy*, ECDA position paper, March 2015
<http://www.alliancechronicdiseases.org/assets/docsforsite/pdfs/ECDA%20position%20paper%20on%20alcohol%20-%20March%202015.pdf>

² *Alcohol in Europe a public health perspective*:
http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_europe_en.pdf

It is in the European Union's interest to keep its population in good health. If the EU does not benefit from a healthy population, the repercussions for its economy are grim. All the Union's grand plans rely on people being able to work until increasingly late in life. To ensure this, effective health strategies – including those on alcohol and chronic diseases – are fundamental, as is EU legislation to underpin clear objectives to prevent disease and premature death, and to safeguard Europe's health.

In the circumstances, we would like to request a meeting to discuss the announced EU approach on chronic diseases and to identify some concrete steps to improve Europe's health and help you to achieve the growth and employment objectives that you have set for your term in office.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Johan de Sutter
Acting Chairman, European Chronic Disease Alliance

Cc Commissioner Andriukaitis
 Commissioner Timmermans
 Commissioner Katainen

About ECDA

The European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA) is a coalition of 11 European health organisations sharing the same interests in combating preventable chronic diseases through European policies that impact health. ECDA represents millions of chronic disease patients and over 200 000 health professionals.

ECDA's mission is to reverse the alarming rise in chronic diseases by providing leadership and policy recommendations based on contemporary evidence.

For further information contact the Secretariat:

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