

## HOPE Position on the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan

The European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE), representing national hospital associations and healthcare organisations across Europe, welcomes the European Commissions initiative to develop a comprehensive EU Cardiovascular Health Plan.

For hospitals and healthcare providers, the impact is direct and escalating: rising admissions, longer stays, increasing demand for specialised interventions, and significant resource pressures. We believe that an EU-level framework dedicated to cardiovascular health is needed to support Member States, address health inequalities, and enable hospitals to shift from reactive to proactive and preventive care models.

Hospitals across Europe face a daily reality where too many patients arrive at advanced stages of cardiovascular disease. These late-stage cases are often preventable, but weaknesses in early prevention, insufficient population-based screening, and uneven access to diagnostic and monitoring services result in avoidable hospitalisations. Emergency admissions due to heart attacks and strokes many occurring in individuals with undiagnosed conditions are a stark reminder of systemic gaps.

For hospitals, the problem is not only medical but also structural. Cardiovascular diseases account for billions in direct healthcare costs and indirect economic losses, creating sustained pressure on hospital budgets, infrastructure, and workforce. The demographic trend of ageing populations further exacerbates this burden, threatening the sustainability of care delivery. Without coordinated action, hospitals will continue to operate in crisis mode, diverting resources to acute interventions rather than long-term health improvement. HOPE strongly supports the Commissions identification of three action areas as prevention, early detection, and management and rehabilitation as the pillars of the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan. From the hospitals perspective, each of these areas is vital.

The most effective way to reduce the hospital burden is by tackling risk factors before they lead to acute disease. Hospitals see the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles every day, and they support comprehensive EU action to promote healthier diets, physical activity, tobacco cessation, and alcohol reduction. Hospitals also call for targeted initiatives addressing vulnerable groups, where cardiovascular risks are more prevalent. Hospitals emphasise that timely identification of cardiovascular risk factors is transformative. EU guidance and protocols for systematic health checks, combined with the deployment of digital tools for monitoring and personalised treatment, will allow hospitals to intervene earlier and with greater precision. This reduces avoidable admissions and improves outcomes for patients, while supporting hospitals in managing resources more efficiently.

Hospitals stress the importance of structured care pathways linking acute, chronic, and rehabilitative care. Proper rehabilitation and continuity of care after discharge are critical to prevent relapse and re-

hospitalisation. EU support for developing integrated, cross-border models of care and rehabilitation will strengthen hospitals ability to sustain outcomes and empower patients in self-management.

Hospitals are at the frontline of healthcare innovation, and the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan should enable them to capitalise on new technologies. Artificial intelligence, digital health solutions, and personalised medicine hold enormous potential to transform cardiovascular care. Hospitals see the European Health Data Space as a unique opportunity to move from reactive care to predictive and personalised models, using real-world evidence to anticipate and prevent complications.

The EU framework should ensure that AI and digital tools are validated, governed responsibly, and accessible to all hospitals, regardless of size or geography. Without such safeguards, digital innovation risks deepening health inequalities rather than reducing them.

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*HOPE, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation, is a European non-profit organisation, created in 1966. HOPE represents national public and private hospitals associations and hospitals owners either federations of local and regional authorities or national health services. Today, HOPE is made up of 36 organisations coming from the 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as from the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Serbia as observer members. HOPE mission is to promote improvements in the health of citizens throughout Europe, high standard of hospital care and to foster efficiency with humanity in the organisation and operation of hospital and healthcare services.*