

## OPEN-EU Reaction to EU Council Conclusions 17-21 July - A way forward

At first glance, the recent culmination of the [Special European Council, 17-21 July 2020](#) to discuss the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 resulted in an extremely disappointing message sent to Europeans, underlining that in a time of crisis, there is a disconnect between economic values and consumer health which may challenge Europe's ambition to be a leading global player in health as well as economy.

However, as the Council, under the auspices of the German EU Presidency, regrouped after the summer break to finalise their negotiation mandate, the 10 leading health actors who make up the Obesity Policy Engagement Network - EU (OPEN-EU) consider the current state of affairs to be an opportunity to properly address the health crisis of **224 million of a total EU population of 447.7 million inhabitants living with “dysfunctional/ abnormal or excessive adiposity” (overweight or obesity); 80% of whom go on to develop Type 2 diabetes and if treated properly would prevent 20% of cancers from developing.**

As outlined in our Position Paper [“Obesity and Covid-19 exit strategies and towards a “New Normal” for resilient health systems”](#) and [subsequent amendments](#) endorsed by OPEN-EU<sup>1</sup> to the EU4Health Programme Draft Report by MEP Cristian Buşoi, addressing obesity properly, as other chronic relapsing diseases, will go a long way to strengthening the health and wellbeing of those residing in the EU.

**We therefore call on the Council, Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Finance Ministers across the EU, the European Parliament and the Commission** to take this opportunity to reassess how to achieve desired health outcomes and to particularly focus on a holistic person-centred approach to the chronic disease of obesity and its related complications. As such, we recommend:

- **Embracing “Next Generation EU”** thinking to seize the opportunity to realise outcomes based healthcare systems at both regional and EU levels.
- **Plotting creative pathways** such as a **Joint Action on Obesity** to ensure collaborative and inclusive problem solving which promotes sustainable uptake at all levels.
- **Collectively addressing** gateway chronic diseases such as obesity beyond the welcomed categorisation of “medical vulnerability due to underlying medical condition” within the [Communication on short-term EU health preparedness for future COVID-19 outbreaks](#)
- **Introducing comprehensive guidelines** which will ensure the safe continuation in all Member States of obesity treatment centres under pandemic conditions and help to unlock vital medical, psychological and surgical interventions for people with obesity in need of care.

<sup>1</sup> Amendments 192, 252, 260, 271, 272, 273, 276, 277, 278, 284, 296, 304, 314, 451

- **Strengthening** existing instruments such as the **EU Semester process** to ensure health indicators for chronic diseases, including obesity, are measured using an outcomes-based approach that includes measurements for severity as well as prevalence
- **Ringfence funding** to ensure continued access to obesity prevention, treatment and management across regional funding instruments to allow for physical and digital infrastructure expansion of Obesity Centres of Excellence and interconnectivity with the EU Health Data Space.
- **Boosting** support above the current Council agreed levels for the EU4Health Programme and Horizon Europe to ensure the sustainability of desired health and innovation outcomes.

OPEN-EU organisations stand ready, willing and able to be active stakeholders in collaborating with all actors to find an equitable solution that protects our greatest assets in Europe; the health and wellbeing of all residents including the most vulnerable.

#### **About OPEN - Obesity Policy Engagement Network ([www.obesityopen.org](http://www.obesityopen.org))**

Originally founded in 2018, OPEN is a global initiative focussed on ensuring policies support and enable access to holistic obesity care to ensure sustainable health outcomes for people living with obesity. A key element of OPEN is the acknowledgment that sustainable progress cannot be made by one stakeholder or one sector acting alone. As such,

OPEN welcomes a wide range of stakeholders willing to make a difference:

- Patient representatives
- Policy makers at all levels
- Payers
- Employers
- Health care and public health professionals
- Research and innovation communities
- Economic actors from all sectors who can impact the health outcomes of people living with obesity

OPEN-EU acts as a collaborative policy coalition, which seeks to ensure that all relevant European institutional strategies and policies integrate measures that effectively help support people living with obesity at EU, national and Regional levels and that the treatment of obesity as a gateway diseases to Type 2 diabetes, certain cancers and over 230 other complications of obesity

OPEN has identified four key pillars of action which are common across world regions:

1. **Awareness** of obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease
2. **Education** on obesity for health professionals, people living with obesity and all other actors who can have an impact on outcomes
3. Sufficient **resources** to sustainably achieve better outcomes for people living with obesity and hence stem the epidemic
4. Establishment of and access to **multidisciplinary centres of excellence and care**

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