

OPEN-EU Stakeholder Statement on European Commission's Foresight Report & Process in light of ongoing negotiations on EU4Health

Brussels, 15 October 2020

OPEN-EU (Obesity Policy Engagement Network) commends the European Commission's mission-driven approach to addressing major societal and health challenges facing Europe. To this end, we welcome the strategic foresight approach launched in 2020 and related processes that are underway. In particular, OPEN-EU is greatly encouraged by the Commission's recognition of obesity as a chronic disease in their Strategic Foresight Report "Charting the course towards a more resilient Europe".

Obesity as a disease is severely misunderstood and mislabelled into lifestyle categorisation. That is why its placement within this new text, rightly recognised as a non-communicable disease (NCD), is a major step. It leads towards implementing the correct language, framing, and narrative of obesity including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, as well as its treatment and long-term management along the life course. This is an important milestone in aligning policies with the science of obesity and chronic diseases.

However, we caution that 'actions speak louder than words.' **We encourage the Commission to include elements within the upcoming Strategic Foresight dashboards that will truly impact the obesity community and resilience of health systems.** As emphasised in the Foresight Report, in order for Europe to become more responsive and resilient to future health threats, vulnerabilities need to be addressed. Europe must equip our healthcare systems at regional and national levels to better address the full continuum of obesity. We call on the Commission to take heed of the asks in our [manifesto](#), and implement an action-orientated approach with the establishment of an EU Mission on Obesity including the following elements:

- Reviewing and optimising allocation of healthcare resources to secure funding for care
- Integrating obesity in learning curricula across obesity-related professions to support more effective, informed care
- Establishing multidisciplinary obesity centres and ensuring access to transdisciplinary care for people with obesity

We are also delighted to receive confirmation that obesity is now additionally listed as a chronic disease as part of a compromise amendment to the EU4Health proposal that was voted on by the European Parliament ENVI committee on 14 October 2020. It is time to keep moving with this momentum and we urge the European Council to align with the Commission's report and the European Parliament EU4Health amendment, and categorise obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease. Obtaining governmental, clinical and public recognition of obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease is a key focus area of OPEN, to ensure responsibility moves from individual to shared.

OPEN and the European obesity community stands ready to support this new direction in policy and practice.

Contact: Jacqueline Bowman-Busato | OPEN-EU Secretariat | jbowman@easo.org | Mob. +32 468 222 386

About OPEN-EU

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 disease 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.

[View the OPEN-EU Call to Action here:](#)

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