

# WEBINAR REPORT

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## **MEPS MOBILISING FOR DIABETES WITH SUPPORT OF THE MEP HEART GROUP:**

**‘Supporting ambitious  
Diabetes and CVD  
Roadmaps in the context  
of the ‘Healthier Together  
- EU NCD Initiative’**

**12 MAY 2022, 08.00 - 09.00 CET**



## INTRODUCTION

On May 12, 2022, [MEPs Mobilising for Diabetes \(MMD\)](#), with the support of the [MEP Heart Group](#), held a webinar to explore how an ambitious '[Healthier Together – EU Non-Communicable Diseases \(NCDs\) Initiative](#)' can help improve the prevention of diabetes and CVD as well as their management and the health outcomes and quality of life of people living with these two major NCDs in the European Union.

The Healthier Together Initiative was launched by the European Commission (EC) in December 2021. It aims to help Member States reduce the burden of major NCDs such as diabetes. Cardiovascular disease, for which diabetes is a key risk factor and which is also its leading cause of mortality, is also included in the initiative. A consensus document, described as a “toolkit to guide and coordinate action on NCDs” will be published by the EC in June.

Ms Cajsa Lindberg, the moderator of the webinar and an adviser to IDF Europe, opened this unique joint event, bringing together the diabetes and the heart communities, by underlining that co-creation, collaboration, synergies and mutual understanding are prerequisites to building resilient healthcare systems and a better, fairer and more sustainable future for all EU citizens living with chronic conditions.

## OPENING REMARKS

MEP Christel Schaldemose, co-chair of the MMD Group and a member of the MEP Heart Group, remarked that 10 years after a landmark European Parliament (EP) [Motion for a Resolution on Diabetes](#), many of the Resolution's objectives are still outstanding, and that we really must do more for people living with diabetes (PwD) and those living with CVD to improve their everyday quality of life. She also commented on the fact that while it is beneficial to work together as diabetes and CVD share many of the same risk factors, we must also implement disease-specific actions where these are required.

## PRESENTATIONS

Mr Artur Furtado, Deputy Head of Unit at the EC's DG SANTE, who has been leading the Healthier Together Initiative, presented the current status of the initiative as well as its next steps. Mr Furtado noted that the EC is aligned with the EP and other stakeholders on the need to address diabetes and CVD together and to work on synergies where these are relevant. The current Healthier Together document contains mainly proposals in the area of prevention of diabetes and diabetes-related complications, including CVDs, as well as actions targeting screening and early diagnosis of the disease. The Commissions welcomes innovative ideas that can have a population-wide effect and strengthen the performance of health systems. Speaking of the final document to be released in June, Mr Furtado added: 'It's a toolkit, a guidance document that from the very start is meant to implement and create action.'

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Prof Joao-Filipe Raposo, a Clinical Director at Associação Protectora dos Diabéticos de Portugal, APDP (Portuguese Diabetes Association) and President of the Portuguese Society of Diabetology, shared the perspectives of the diabetes community on the [priority actions](#) that need to be implemented across the EU now to reduce the incidence of diabetes, improve the quality of care notably through better access to care, education, tools and technologies and reduce inequalities in health outcomes. According to Prof Raposo: ***'Diabetes is not just one more disease but a marker of the quality of health systems and well-being societies.'*** Prof Raposo added that by tackling diabetes, we make our health systems and our societies more resilient and sustainable.

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Prof Martin Halle, President of the Preventive Cardiology Association at the European Society of Cardiology, shared the priorities of the CVD community, underlining the fact that metabolic disease and diabetes are the main drivers of heart failure. To overcome diabetes-induced cardio-vascular morbidity and mortality, we must do more to identify at risk individuals, with the help of data, and to strengthen our joint approaches to combat diabetes, CVD and other NCDs. Prof Halle ended his talk by saying: ***'Eliminating diabetes will eliminate heart disease within the next 30 years.'***

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## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel was asked to consider which priorities need to be considered separately in the framework of the Initiative's Joint Action on diabetes and CVD and in which areas the synergies and joined-up approaches would be most beneficial.

**Dr Charmaine Griffiths**, President of the European Heart Network and Chief Executive at the British Heart Foundation, stressed the importance of getting the balance right in relation to the specific care needs of PwD and those living with CVD. At the same time, Dr Griffiths underlined that diabetes is a major risk factor for CVD and 1/3 of PwD in Europe are undiagnosed, therefore, cohesive and joined-up approaches to combat these chronic diseases are very welcome. Dr Griffiths finished off by stating: *'There is a moment for us to seize as a European community to make a real change for people at risk right now.'*

**Dr Niti Pall**, Chair of the International Diabetes Federation Europe, called on all stakeholders to put the person at the centre of all decision-making, among other things, by collecting data on Patient Reported Outcome Measures and Patient Reported Experience Measures for better clinical effectiveness and improved patient safety. Dr Pall also pointed out that diabetes drives a lot of CVD outcomes and that this needs to be reflected in the statistics on CVD mortality.

**Prof Chantal Mathieu**, President of the European Diabetes Forum, stressed that diabetes and CVD have many commonalities but that we need to strengthen both generic and disease-specific approaches. According to Prof Mathieu, it is also key to fight stigma and discrimination and support people in leading healthy lifestyles. Prof Mathieu also highlighted the urgent need for screening for children and young people living with Type 1 diabetes. She added that avoiding any child dying from diabetic ketoacidosis in Europe should be a very important target.

**MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen**, co-chair of the MMD Group and a member of the MEP Heart Group, highlighted the need for a whole-of-society approach to tackle diabetes, CVD and other NCDs, and the importance of addressing the socio-economic and commercial determinants of health to achieve optimal health outcomes, instead of attributing the responsibility to individual choices.

Mr Artur Furtado echoed many of the comments from the panel discussion, stressing that we need to work on the choice environment, whereby what we consider individual responsibility is so heavily framed by society and commercial determinants, and tackle the inequalities in our society to support people in leading healthy lifestyles. Mr Furtado stressed the fact that the unique co-creation and participatory approach of the Healthier Together Initiative will lead to more engagement from Member States, institutions and stakeholders to address the NCD burden in a structured and meaningful way, making full use of the recommendations, best practices and financial instruments deployed by the Commission.

## CLOSING REMARKS

MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen closed the event by thanking all the participants for their expert opinions and meaningful insights on the actions that need to be implemented across Europe to turn the tide on diabetes and CVD. MEP Pietikäinen reiterated the European Parliament's support for an ambitious Initiative that has the potential to make a real difference to the quality of life and well-being of PwD and people living with cardio-vascular disease.