

Geneva, September 12, 2017

Oral statement of the World Stroke Organisation (WSO) and the European Stroke Organisation (ESO)

at the WHO-EURO Regional Committee for Europe, 67th session, Budapest,
Hungary, 11–14 September 2017

While the world is preparing for the 2018 high level United Nations meeting on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the proportion of NCDs continues to increase in Europe. Stroke is a tragic example of this insufficient progress: over the last 25 years, **stroke has become the 2nd cause of disability and the 2nd cause of death worldwide**. Given this large scale problem across all countries and continents, stroke is about to affect everyone directly or indirectly. This is an avoidable tragedy for patients, families and societies, because stroke is largely preventable and treatable.

Europe's progress in prevention and treatment of NCD is modest. It is worth remembering that 90% of stroke are linked to **10 modifiable risk factors** that include hypertension, smoking, overweight, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diet. These factors are essentially the same for ischaemic heart disease, the other main cause of disability and death in Europe and around the globe. As a neurological disorder, most survivors of stroke carry a lifelong burden of physical, cognitive, mental, and socio-economic consequences.

The WSO and ESO call upon the European Regional Committee of WHO to support its member states to increase their efforts in three domains targeted by the **World Stroke Day 2017 "Face the Facts: Stroke is Treatable"**:

- 1) *Awareness*: We invite WHO to strengthen programs that increase awareness of stroke symptoms, stroke risk factors, and the consequences of stroke.
- 2) *Access* : We support the WHO in its efforts to remove financial barriers to prevention and detection of NCDs, including through universal health coverage; this will allow for implementation of population-wide prevention strategies.
- 3) *Action* : We offer to support the WHO in the development of regional and national strategies (such as the HEARTS package) to deliver the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the reduction of premature NCD deaths by one-third by 2030.

WORLD STROKE ORGANIZATION

7 Rue François-Versonnex
PO Box 6053, 1207 Geneva 6
Switzerland

Tel: + 41 22 906 9166
Fax: +41 22 906 26 07
E-mail: admin@world-stroke.org

European Stroke Organisation

P.O. Box
4002 Basel
Switzerland

Phone: +41 61 686 77 76
Email: esoinfo@eso-stroke.org

Similar to the WSO, ESO and the lay organization Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE) will work on improving stroke awareness and care with the 2018 launch of their **Action Plan for Stroke in Europe 2018-2030**.

The bottom line of our call and campaigns is the same for individuals, health care systems, governments and the WHO: lives can improve with better awareness, access, and action.

Furthermore, we strongly suggest that “stroke” as a disease entity should be more visible in WHO documents. While stroke has many of the same risk factors as heart diseases, it makes a major impact by itself. More importantly, its symptoms, its treatments and its consequences are unique and sorely under recognized by the public, and this impacts outcomes. Rather than the term “cardiovascular diseases” we favour the use of “**Heart diseases and stroke**”. This term highlights these two distinct diseases that together have the overall highest health impact on mortality and disability in the world.

WSO/ESO representative at the WHO-EURO Regional Committee for Europe, 67th session: Prof Patrik Michel, Lausanne, Switzerland, from the WSO Board of Directors and Global Policy Committee; ESO fellow

About the World Stroke Organisation (WSO)

The WSO promotes stroke awareness and knowledge through its annual World Stroke Day, the World Stroke Campaign, and educational programs like the World Stroke Academy. Professionals and searchers benefit from clinical exchange programs, the biannual World Stroke Congress, and the International Journal of Stroke. WSO supports patients with post-stroke checklists, its Roadmap for Quality Stroke Care, and through stroke support organisations. WSO is in official relation with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

World Stroke Organisation website: www.stroke-org.org

Contact: mgrupper@kenes.com

About the European Stroke Organisation (ESO)

The ESO aims to improve stroke care in Europe by promoting awareness, prevention and treatment of all aspects of stroke. Through the annual ESO conference, best practice approaches, the European Stroke Journal, teaching and research, the ESO's strives to support and harmonise stroke management by professionals and the lay public. ESO works as the voice of stroke in Europe to develop and promote public policies to reduce stroke's individual and societal burden.

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