

Geneva, September 6, 2019

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

at the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 69th session, Copenhagen, September 2019 related to agenda item 5(j), the

Roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Health 2020, the European policy for health and well-being: lessons learned from Health 2020

There is increasing focus NCDs in general - and cardiovascular disease with its two main components **stroke and heart disease** - are gaining ground in several European countries. Stroke and heart disease share many risk factors, however, the long term personal and socioeconomic impact of stroke on society requires specific action and policy. Projections for the next decades tell that the number of persons in Europe who have had a stroke will increase strongly.

These three stroke- and NCD-related issues need urgent attention in Europe:

- 90% of strokes and most NCDs are linked to 10 **modifiable risk factors** including hypertension, smoking, alcohol use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diet. Implementation of health policies and prevention to reduce these risks is still too slow in Europe.
- Stroke care requires **dedicated service on all levels of care built around “stroke units”**. Stroke units deliver immediate treatments, manage early complications and apply effective secondary prevention. Access to stroke unit care is highly unequal in Europe, treatment in stroke units are currently offered less than half of all stroke patients.
- The multifaceted face of **stroke requires comprehensive stroke action plans**. Professional and patient organisations have established these in the form of the “Action Plan for Stroke in Europe 2018–2030” (ESO and the Stroke Alliance for Europe) and the “Global Stroke Guidelines and Action Plan Roadmap for Quality Stroke Care” (WSO). These plans have the potential to increase stroke awareness, access to quality stroke treatment, primary and secondary prevention, and long-term care if supported by UN member states.

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Hence, the WSO and ESO calls upon WHO Europe and the European UN member states to increase their efforts against stroke in three domains:

- 1) **Better implement of population-wide prevention strategies for stroke and NCDs**, such as detecting and treating hypertension, combating traditional and new forms of tobacco use (SDG target 3.a), reducing the harmful use of alcohol (SDG target 3.5), encouraging physical activity and a healthy diet;
- 2) **Enhance services for stroke patients, including establishing and use of stroke units**, essential medicines, and medical devices such as endovascular treatment and rehabilitation, all accessible through universal health coverage to reduce inequalities;
- 3) **Use existing comprehensive stroke action plans** from European and global stroke experts and patient groups to guide policy decisions on all aspects of stroke, including its prevention, detection, treatment, and long-term care.

In summary, WSO and ESO strongly support WHO Europe's efforts to upscale actions in reducing the burden of stroke and other NCDs and ask that the specific actions highlighted in this statement should be especially considered.

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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 researchers 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

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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 support of research, ESO strives to support and harmonise stroke management by professionals and the lay public. ESO acts as the voice of stroke in Europe to develop and promote public policies to reduce the individual and societal burden caused by stroke.

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