Proposed questions in view of the hearings of the Commissioners’ candidates
July 2019

IMCO Committee

Questions for the Commissioner designate for Internal Market and Executive Vice-President-designate for a Europe fit for the Digital Age

- How will the Commissioner designate ensure that health concerns are considered within internal market rules and in the scope of the EU digital framework, including by taking measures to address the direct and indirect online promotion and marketing of health-harmful products including alcohol and foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) to young people and other vulnerable groups?

- Similarly, how will you ensure that measures are taken to address the direct and indirect online promotion and marketing tobacco products (including e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products)?

- Can the Commissioner designate commit to address the issue of cross-border advertising of alcohol within the EU; and support member states in excluding alcohol from product placement and sponsorship in commercial communications during its mandate?

About ECDA

The European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA) is a Brussels-based coalition of 10 European health organizations representing major chronic diseases such as: liver disease, kidney disease, respiratory disease, COPD, allergic diseases, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, and diabetes; and sharing the same interests in combating preventable chronic diseases through European policies that impact health. Together, we represent over millions of patients and over 200,000 health professionals. ECDA plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of chronic diseases by providing policy recommendations based on contemporary evidence. Its main priorities are primary and secondary prevention related to chronic diseases and the common risk factors - tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, and environmental factors.

For further information contact the Secretariat:
ECDA Secretariat- 22-24 rue du Luxembourg – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
E-Mail: info@alliancechronicdiseases.org
Website: www.alliancechronicdiseases.org
Tel.: + 32-2 213 13 42
Facts & figures on chronic disease

Prevalence
> The prevalence of chronic diseases and disabling conditions has been growing in the EU and the wider European region over the past decades.
> One third of the European population aged 15 and over, and 23.5% of the working age population in the EU lives with a chronic disease.
> The co-occurrence of two or more chronic conditions (multimorbidity) has become increasingly common in Europe.
> Two out of three people at retirement age have at least two chronic conditions.

Mortality
> Globally, Europe has the highest burden of chronic diseases, which are responsible for 86% of all deaths and a major cause of morbidity and disability estimated in disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs).
> 550,000 people of working age die from four major chronic diseases (CVD, cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes) in the EU every year.

Socio-economic impact
> The premature death of more than 550,000 people of working age annually across the EU represents a loss of around 3.4 million potential productive life years and costs the EU economy euros 115 billion a year. This corresponds to 0.8% of the GDP in the EU.
> 70-80% of healthcare costs are spent on chronic diseases in Europe.
> Direct costs of healthcare to treat people with chronic diseases amount to €700 billion in the EU.
> Productivity losses are estimated at €54 billion per year for cardiovascular diseases alone.
> The employment rate of people who have one or more chronic condition, and particularly people aged 50-59, is much lower than for those who do not suffer from any disease.
> Prolonged sickness leave of one month or more is frequent among employed persons with circulatory problems, including heart disease or attack (29%) as well as stress, depression or anxiety (25%) and musculoskeletal problems (25%).
> On average only 3% of total health expenditure (for all age groups) in OECD countries including EU Member States goes towards population wide public prevention while 97% of health expenses are presently spent on treatment.

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1 Eurostat, 2010; Busse et al., 2010
http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264265592-en
3 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5923823/
4 Boyd & Fortin, 2010; Uijen & van der Lisdonk, 2008
6 WHO high level Consultation. 2011 http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2010/10/12/10th-high-level-consultation-noncommunicable-diseases
9 Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012
10 Eurostat, 2010; Busse et al., 2010
12 European Heart Network paper on CVD and chronic diseases