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Preventing diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases

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Foreword

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are diseases that are not transmissible from one person to another, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases. NCDs are the result of **unhealthy**

an enormous part of the burden that public health systems in the Member States are facing. The increasing rates of deaths related to NCDs in Europe are concerning, but although running rampant, the complex health issues caused by NCDs can be tackled, if we improve prevention measures and promote health.

Healthy diets are a key aspect of our lifestyle, and can help tackling the rise of NCDs. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats is essential for our overall health, and reduces the risk of chronic illnesses.

The **Preventia project** aims to decrease the spreading of NCDs across the EU, while reducing health inequalities and fostering cooperation and exchanges between the EU Member States.



Stay tuned for news about the consortium and developments from the project

SAFE, LCI, EEKE, CEIP, Promote Ukraine, U.DI.CON, ADOC

Over the past two years, we have worked closely with schools, migration centres, NGOs, and medical institutions to deliver targeted programmes that advance health equity and promote disease prevention across Europe.

Key events in pilot countries include:

We developed and delivered tailored educational materials and conducted over 20 training sessions across Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania, reaching approximately 600 children and adolescents.

Fostering healthy lifestyles through community engagement

Our community-based culinary workshops brought together migrants in Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Croatia, promoting healthy eating habits while encouraging cultural exchange. In total, 107 participants from migration centres took part.

Strengthening medical collaboration across borders

A twinning programme at Galeazzi–Sant’Ambrogio Hospital in Milan connected healthcare professionals from Belgium, Croatia, and Lithuania, supporting knowledge exchange and capacity building.

Mobilising citizens for better health

In Athens, a public awareness campaign engaged over 650 citizens, raising awareness around prevention and healthy living. In Rome, a citizen event offered children training sessions, physical activities, and healthy snacks, while adults benefited from free medical consultations and yoga classes. In Bilje (Croatia), an information stand was set up where citizens could test the BiteWatch app, receive advice from a nutritionist, and access promotional materials.

Additionally, we conducted an assessment of NCD policies in partner countries. The findings informed a [policy brief](#) that provides a comprehensive set of recommendations to support more effective public health policymaking.

Furthermore, for consumer empowerment, SAFE launched BiteWatch®, a free mobile phone application to make informed food choices. By scanning food products, users access nutritional insights and identify potentially harmful ingredients.

The app can be downloaded at the following links:

[iOS](#)

[Android](#)

In the upcoming months, we will organise:

- NCD-focused workshops, partnering with NGOs and Ukrainian professionals;
- The project final event in Brussels.

Find out more about our activities on our [project's webpage](#).

Citizen Campaign Event in Rome



On 15 May, our project partner U.Di.Con. hosted the Citizen Campaign Event in Rome to raise awareness and improve health literacy on the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The initiative sought to bridge the gap between European health policies and grassroots community action by translating policy objectives into practical, community-based activities.

The programme combined physical wellness activities with educational sessions on lifestyle-related disease prevention. Adults participated in yoga workshops and received free health screenings and personalised consultations delivered by medical experts

training materials, and were provided with a healthy snack consisting of yogurt and fresh fruit.

The event brought together participants from diverse demographic groups, including local students, young people, healthcare professionals, and representatives of the project's European partner organisations, fostering intergenerational dialogue on health and wellbeing. By combining scientific dissemination with practical prevention tools and direct access to health services, the campaign successfully improved health literacy across different age groups while strengthening collaboration of different EU member states in health promotion.



Uncover the most relevant news about non-communicable diseases, nutrition and health

[Everything you need to know about sugar – from how much you should consume, to some of its 50 disguises](#), *The Guardian*, 14 June 2026

Fructose, glucose, sucrose. Lactose, maltose, dextrose. Treacle, molasses, honey! The sweet stuff is everywhere, in everything from colas and cakes to fruit and veg. Are some forms healthier than others? And what about artificial sweeteners?

[Healthier habits handbook: resource document for adolescents living with overweight or obesity](#), WHO, 1 June 2026

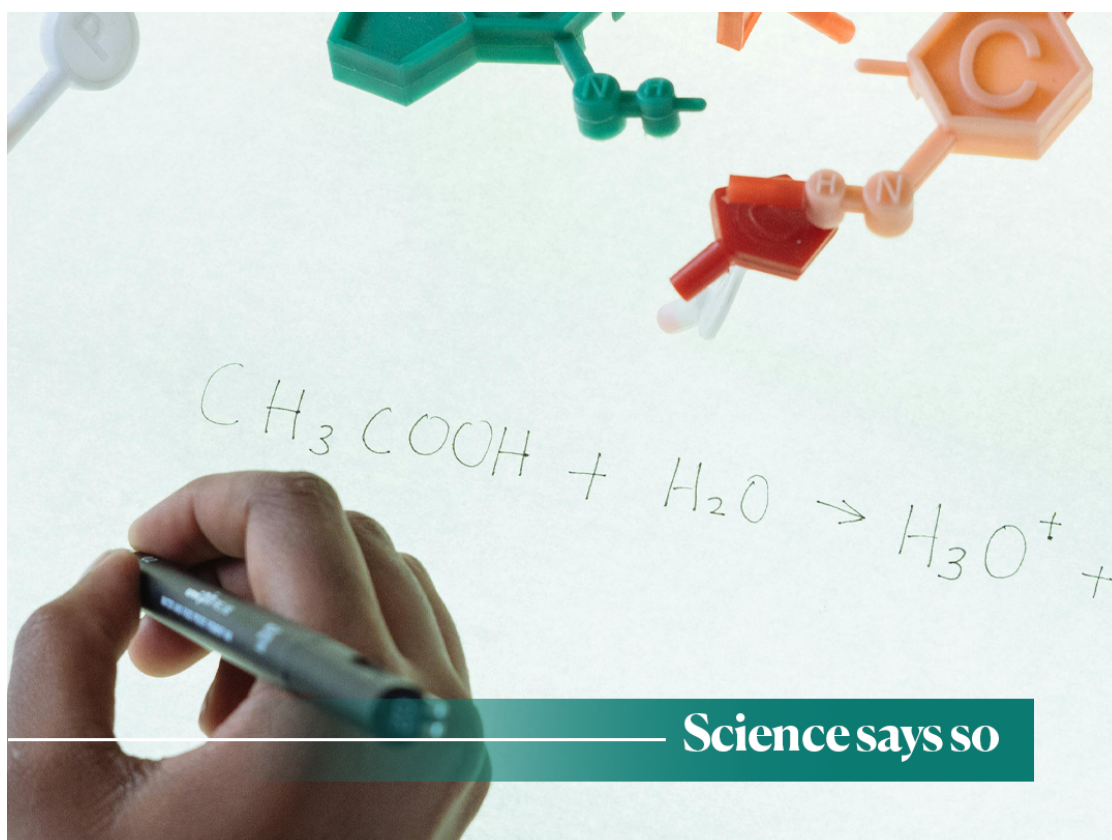
WHO created a resource document for adolescents living with overweight or obesity who are concerned and would like some practical advice.

[The Health and Economic Benefits of Tackling Non-Communicable Diseases](#), OECD, 15 April 2026

diabetes and chronic lung conditions now affect millions more people than a generation ago, and the trend is still moving in the wrong direction. This report shows why tackling NCDs matters beyond the health sector. NCDs cut lives short, affect quality of people's life, and reduce their ability to work.

New WHO health inequality country profiles to track progress on achieving health equity, WHO, 12 May 2026

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released interactive health inequality country profiles showing the state of health inequality in countries based on the Organization's principal global health strategy, the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14).



Science says so

Uncover the most relevant scientific studies about non-communicable diseases, nutrition and health

Ultraprocessed foods and obesity: Interpreting the evidence, *Science*, 4 June 2026

The concept of ultraprocessed food (UPF) has attracted considerable interest from the scientific community, the public, and policy-makers, fueled by evidence from observational studies linking UPF consumption to obesity and related diseases. The study questions if the adverse effects of UPFs are caused by ultraprocessing itself or if they are a consequence of their nutritional properties.

Plant-Based Diet Linked to Lower Alzheimer's Risk, Study Finds, *SciTechDaily*, 26 May 2026

Researchers found that not all plant-based diets are equal when it comes to dementia risk. The findings hint that certain long-term dietary patterns may subtly shape brain health as people age.

While the Body Mass Index (BMI) remains the most widely used indicator, alternative frameworks such as the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) classification, the metabolically healthy obesity (MHO) concept, and the recent Lancet functional framework offer broader, clinically oriented perspectives.

Parents' stress may be quietly driving childhood obesity, Yale study finds, *ScienceDaily*, 8 March 2026

A Yale study found that lowering parent stress can help protect young children from obesity. When parents practiced mindfulness and stress-management skills, their kids showed healthier eating patterns and avoided the weight gain seen in families that only focused on diet and exercise.



EU Regulatory Updates

Find out the latest positions, progresses and regulatory developments on health, nutrition and NCDs prevention

Leaders' call on the fight against cancer, G7 France Evian, June 2026

The leaders of the G7 reaffirm their commitment to accelerate the fight against cancer. Partner countries of the G7, Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya and the Republic of Korea, also support this call on the fight against cancer. They are determined to deepen international scientific cooperation, close persistent gaps in prevention and early detection, and ensure that progress in oncology reaches every patient. They commit to strengthen their endeavours to advance cancer research and development.

Cardiovascular health: MEPs call on EU to boost disease prevention, European

On Wednesday, Parliament's Public Health Committee adopted its response to the EU's first ever cardiovascular health plan. The report, which reacts to the "Safe Hearts Plan", calls for a coordinated approach to preventing cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) and their interconnected risk factors and comorbidities, including all major non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension, cancer, chronic kidney disease, obesity and many others.

The European Code Against Cancer, 5th edition, International Agency for Research on Cancer WHO, June 2026

For the first time, the European Code Against Cancer, 5th edition (ECAC5) is aimed not only at individuals but also at policy-makers, including 14 complementary recommendations on population-level measures that may reinforce the recommendations for individuals.

Report webinar "Are we reducing cancer inequalities in Europe?", Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, 11 June 2026

The webinar was co-organised by the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) and the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA) to mark European Week Against Cancer 2026, themed Together Against Cancer Inequalities. Five representatives of EU4Health cancer projects presented their ongoing efforts to reduce inequalities across the cancer pathway, from prevention to survivorship.

Roadmap for a European Food Policy Council now published, EPHA, 9 June 2026

Europe's food systems face mounting pressures and are a major driver of both non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and environmental degradation. The roadmap examines key gaps in current EU agri-food governance, including limited deliberative quality, fragmented policymaking, and weak coordination across governance levels. It proposes a more coordinated configuration of existing and emerging governance mechanisms.

Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes gain momentum across the globe, *News medical Life sciences*, 9 June 2026

One of the challenges public health officials face in reducing diet-related disease is the relatively easy and inexpensive access to sugar-sweetened beverages globally. To help address this burden, public health organisations like the World Health Organization and American Heart Association have recommended that governments tax sugar-sweetened beverages.

Stronger together: European collaboration to center health equity in cancer and other NCD prevention, JA PreventNCD, 26 May 2026

As Europe marks the European Week Against Cancer this May, a renewed focus on prevention and equity is more important than ever. This year's campaign places particular emphasis on ending inequalities in access to prevention, early detection, treatment, and care for all. In this context, the policy brief "Stronger together: European collaboration to center health equity in cancer and other NCD prevention" highlights how European-level collaboration can strengthen efforts to prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and reduce health inequalities, aligning closely with this year's focus on equity in all aspects of cancer prevention and care.



Upcoming events on NCDs, prevention, and healthy nutrition

6th Visegrad Four (V4) Countries Public Health Conference, organised by EUPHA , 9-11 September 2026, High Tatras, Slovakia

One Health: Strengthening the links between human, animal, and ecosystem health in research, policy and practice, organised by EUPHA Environment and Health Section, 18 September 2026, Online

Portorož Youth Health Forum 2026, organised by Youth Health Organization, 20-24 September 2026, Portorož, Slovenia

Health for a stronger European Union, High time for action!, organised by European Health Forum Gastein, 29 September - 2 October 2026, Bad Hofgastein, Austria

Urban and global synergies: shaping the future of public health with climate resilience, equity and innovation, organised by European Public Health Association, 10-13 November 2026, Bilbao, Spain

Health, environment, climate: an EU agenda to reduce the burden of disease and inequalities, organised by EuroHealthNet, 25 November 2026, Brussels, Belgium

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Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect

