

MEP Interest group launches within the European Parliament on Obesity & Health System Resilience

EMBARGOED until 20 April 2021 00:01

Brussels, 20 April 2021: Today a group of leading MEPs from across political groups, led by Pernille Weiss MEP (EPP-DK), have come together to launch an MEP Interest Group on Obesity & Health System Resilience. The MEP Interest Group has been established in order to make resilient health systems a reality by addressing obesity as a prioritised chronic disease.

The move comes amid concerns that although the EU has officially categorised obesity as a chronic disease, there is as yet no sign of measures being implemented to ensure EU level strategies reflect this development. This raises concerns that despite COVID-19 magnifying a clear and urgent need to follow through on the EU's prioritisation of obesity as a chronic disease, no immediate action will be taken to address it as such.

MEP Pernille Weiss (EPP-DK) Chair of the Interest Group and current Shadow Rapporteur for the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy in ITRE Committee states, "We may be starting to see the light on COVID-19 and realising that we must focus on resilience. However, we must also realise that all of us, policymakers and all parts of society cannot fall into the trap of doing business as usual. We cannot stand by and almost passively not learn the lessons of COVID-19 on our health and the health of the European economy."

60% of Europeans already live with pre-obesity or obesity. Primary prevention interventions no longer apply to this major group of the population. This has been acknowledged by the European Commission and previously by the European Parliament as part of the EU4Health passage. We cannot build resilient health systems without properly addressing obesity as we do other major chronic diseases; namely prevention, treatment and long-term management along the life course."

The focus of the MEP Interest group is to find ways to build on and identify policy pathways that can lead to full implementation of the European Commission's new brief on obesity primary prevention published on 4 March 2021 which clearly categorises obesity as a chronic disease.

The MEP Interest Group's key aims and objectives are to

- Embed the language of obesity as an NCD (non-communicable disease) within the European Parliament and shift the dialogue beyond prevention
- Set-up a workable framework for National Plans on obesity as an NCD
- Advocate for the collection of data across people living with obesity's life course to enable for realistic treatment and management options

- Call for the implementation of Obesity Centres of Excellence and sufficient resources to implement obesity as an NCD (interconnected with other NCDs such as cancer)

MEP Sara Cerdas (S&D-PT), Vice Chair of the Interest group as well as Member of the EP Special Committee on Cancer says: *“‘Building Back Better’ after COVID-19 needs to go beyond rhetoric and put checks and balances against our political goodwill. One of the key priorities for resilience is addressing obesity as a chronic relapsing disease. But how can we do this without clear guidelines in place that map out pathways for holistic treatment and long-term management along the life course. The EU can add value by working on a framework for national plans on obesity as we have done for the other major chronic diseases. Now is the time to act”*

MEP Susana Solís Pérez (Renew Europe Group – ES) states *“We are doing a major disservice to the next generation of Europeans by not putting strong policies in place to allow addressing obesity as we do other major chronic diseases. In order to stem this tide of onset of childhood obesity, we need to take a life course approach. This means being realistic and going beyond primary prevention in designing policies, but taking into account access to a full set of treatment and appropriate long term management options for adults and children”.*

Dr Nathalie Farpour-Lambert, President of EASO, *“EASO is delighted to be providing the Expert Secretariat to the much-needed MEP Interest Group on Obesity & Health System Resilience. As representatives of obesity professionals across Europe, we see every day the very real consequences of not implementing policies that address obesity as a chronic relapsing disease.*

Our aim is to support MEPs not only with the evidence we generate as researchers, and clinical guidelines developed by our task forces, but most importantly to provide a bridge between the science and policy ambitions.”

ENDS

EDITOR NOTES

Contact:

MEP Interest Group Secretariat

Jacqueline Bowman-Busato

jbowman@easo.org

Mobile: + 32 468 222 386

<p>MEP Pernille Weiss Communications Jonatan Grau Moeller – Media Advisor jonatan.moeller@europarl.europa.eu Mobile: +45 60 46 77 55</p>	<p>MEP Sara Cerdas Communications Cristina Correia - Communication Advisor MEP Sara CERDAS cristina.rodriguescorreia@europarl.europa.eu Tel. +32 2 28 38454</p>	<p>MEP Susana Solis-Perez Communications Javier Balmaseda - Communications Manager Cs Europa javier.balmaseda@europarl.europa.eu Tel. +34 607 91 66 87</p>
---	--	--

About the MEP Interest Group on Obesity & Health System Resilience

Constituted in March 2021, the MEP Interest Group on Obesity & Health System Resilience focuses on finding policy solutions to remove barriers in the implementation of obesity as a chronic relapsing disease in Europe and contribute to building back resilient health systems

building on the Strategic Foresight Process and the EU4Health agenda.

<https://mepobesityinterest.eu/>

Twitter: [@EuObesity](#)

LinkedIn: [MEP Interest Group on Obesity and Health System Resilience](#)

The Expert Secretariat is coordinated by European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) www.easo.org | [@EASOobesity](#) |

About EASO

Established in 1986, EASO is a federation of professional membership associations from 36 European countries. It is the voice of European obesity professionals, representing a community of over 20,000 scientists, healthcare practitioners, physicians, public health experts, early career researchers, students and patients.

EASO is in formal relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, coordinates the EU Obesity Policy Engagement Network (OPEN-EU) and is a member of the EU Health Coalition and the Biomedical Alliance in Europe.