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## MEP working groups call for more action in fighting chronic diseases



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Aiming to bring prevention of chronic diseases to the top of the EU agenda, the MEP Heart Group, the MEP Group for Kidney Health, the EU Diabetes Working Group and MEPs Against Cancer organised a joint meeting in the European Parliament, together with representatives of health professionals and health activists at European level.

In a joint statement the MEPs called upon the competent authorities in the member states to urgently develop and improve policies aiming at tackling chronic diseases. They call for more investment in preventative care including more awareness and promotion of healthy living.

The meeting highlighted numerous actions, which should be adopted and promoted such as high tobacco and alcohol taxes; smoke free environment; good nutrition labelling and prioritising pedestrians and cyclists.

The participants call on the MEPs, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and national governments to work together to tackle the problem of chronic diseases and put in place effective Europe-wide policies aimed at prevention. They also called all EU head of states to contribute to and to attend the United Nations high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September 2011 on the prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases.

The co-chairs of the four MEP Groups strongly supports the initiative taken by the trio of the European Union presidencies to give priority to the prevention of chronic diseases and support the initiative of the Belgian Council presidency to raise awareness on the burden of chronic diseases at its upcoming conference of 19 – 20 October.

The European Commission has already taken steps towards promoting innovation in healthcare with the creation of the Innovation Union, set up last month, which will focus on ten key elements including:

- bringing forward measures to improve access to finance such as a cross border venture capital regime
- stepping up research initiatives by streamlining European and national research policies
- ensuring governments set aside dedicated budgets for public procurement of innovative products and services

The EC has also announced a series of innovation partnerships to help mobilise stakeholders, such as the Active and Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership, which will promote pilots and large scale trials involving patients, caregivers, healthcare facilities and ICT infrastructure to test solutions in a coordinated way across countries. The first pilot partnership will be launched by early 2011 and will aim to extend the proportion of lives lived in good health by at least two years by 2020.

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