
Zoom On: Simon Gillespie, European Heart Network (EHN) President



Simon Gillespie

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President - European Heart
Network (EHN)
CEO - British Heart Foundation
(BHF)

In November 2014, Simon Gillespie was appointed as President of the European Heart Network (EHN). He is the current CEO of the British Heart Foundation (BHF), the UK's primary heart charity and supporter of cardiovascular research. Gillespie has decades of experience in the charity sector and in non-profit governance. He is a trustee of the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies at University College London.

European Heart Network (EHN)

The EHN is comprised of members from 24 countries who work together to reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease in Europe, where it is the leading cause of death. With more than four million deaths per year attributed to CVD, the impact on individuals and families is a primary concern of EHN.

In his new role as EHN President, Gillespie succeeds retiring Professor Staffan Josephson. In a statement made after his appointment, he thanked Professor Josephson for his contributions and said, "I look forward to working with my colleagues across Europe, governments, and health services, to encourage people to lead healthy lifestyles and help stop the damage caused by heart disease and stroke across Europe."

An early goal of the EHN under Gillespie's leadership is addressing the impact of CVD in Central and Eastern European countries, where CVD rates are generally higher than they are in Southern and Western European countries. "This alliance is a powerful voice in helping to reduce risks and ensure people receive the best possible support and care," Gillespie said.

British Heart Foundation (BHF)

Gillespie has been the Chief Executive Officer of the British Heart Foundation (BHF) since 2013. Founded in 1961, the BHF is the UK's largest independent funder of cardiovascular research, and the country's heart charity. The organisation has pioneered research which helps to improve the lives of citizens living with CVD.

"Today in the UK, around 480 people will go to hospital with a heart attack. About seven in ten will survive to return home. In 1961, when the

BHF began, that would have been unthinkable. In those days the odds of survival, let alone recovery, from heart attack were poor," said Gillespie.

In the short time since Gillespie's arrival at BHF, the foundation has reviewed its strategic approach through input from staff, supporters and stakeholders. A theme of the BHF is "Fight for Every Heartbeat". As part of the initiative, Gillespie runs and walks to raise money for BHF's projects.

A Career in Charity and Non-Profit Governance

Prior to his roles at the BHF and EHN, Gillespie served as CEO of the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society from 2006 to 2013. In that position, he oversaw the introduction of new approaches to governance, research and support for MS patients, based on extensive consultation with them. From 2000 to 2004, he was Director of Operations at the Charity Commission, where he coordinated the regulation and support of 180,000 charities in England and Wales. He also served as Head of Operations at the Healthcare Commission, leading the inspection of independent healthcare facilities in England as well as the NHS.

Gillespie spent two decades in the Royal Navy before embarking on his career in the charity sector. He holds an MA degree in Philosophy and Political Science, and MBA, and a MPhil degree in International Relations.

References: British Heart Foundation, civilsociety.co.uk, European Heart Network, Huffington Post

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