



17.02.2016 - Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of death in Europe.

To address this, the WHO Office at the European Union organized a workshop, "Better Food for Better Health", on 16 February 2016 at the European Parliament.

The four major NCDs: cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory diseases and diabetes together account for 86% of premature mortality in Europe.

The 2011 UN Resolution on NCDs recognized the global burden of these diseases, and the EU is contributing to the global effort to prevent and control NCDs by addressing underlying risk factors such as diet and physical activity.

Health - particularly diet and nutrition - is an area in which Europeans can implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Given the high rates of citizens who are overweight and obese, Europeans must strive to achieve SDGs #3 Good Health and Wellbeing, #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities (walking to work; lowering carbon footprint) and #12 Responsible Consumption and Production.

The event presented the scientific basis of the relation between diet and nutrition-related chronic disease.

Improving diets by changing the composition of processed foods is an important means to help reduce the prevalence of nutrition- and diet-related diseases.

A panel discussion, composed of WHO experts, EU policy-makers, EU consumers and EU food manufacturer and retailer associations, focused on topics of salt reduction, trans-fatty acids, sugar and calorie intake.

The event's purpose was to open a debate on identifying shortcomings and challenges before the Conference on Product Improvement, taking place on 22-23 February 2016 and organized by the Dutch EU Presidency.

MEPs raised issues such as the need for better labelling and tackling marketing of foods high in trans-fats, sugar and salt, which has [harmful effects on children](#) .

One critical voice, Italian MEP Elisabetta Gardini identified that the problem is the average lifestyle, which in Europe is very sedentary and hard to change, requiring drastic regulatory overhaul and increased education. Avoid chronic disease by investing in a healthy lifestyle - this simply means a good diet and physical exercise

Fact check

[Half of EU citizens are overweight; One fifth is obese](#)

Keeping #salt intake to less than 5g/day helps prevent #hypertension & reduces risk of heart disease & stroke

[Less than 10% of total energy intake should come from free #sugar](#)

[What are #Transfats and can they be harmful?](#)

Breastfeeding, even up to 2 years old can prevent obesity

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