

The Finnish Heart Association's Response to the European Commission's Public Consultation on the EU Plan for Cardiovascular Health (viety Have your say -järjestelmään 16.9.25)

The Finnish Heart Association warmly welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop a comprehensive EU-wide plan for cardiovascular health. Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death in both Finland and the EU, and their prevention, early detection, and treatment require coordinated action at all levels. The Commission's proposed holistic approach—covering prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation—is well-conceived and responds well to Finland's national needs.

Our comments on the key areas of the plan are as follows:

Prevention

- We emphasize the need to strengthen population-level health promotion and disease prevention, particularly through lifestyle interventions. This requires also policy measures that support healthy choices in everyday life (e.g., nutrition, physical activity, prevention of tobacco and nicotine product use).
- We consider the early adoption of healthy lifestyles, especially among children and youth, to be of critical importance. Adequate resources to health promotion and preventive work is essential.

Early Detection and Screening

- Health checks and screenings should be targeted and effective. Target groups must be carefully identified, taking into account the varying needs of Member States. These should include personalized feedback and counseling, including digital and behavioral support tools that help individuals manage risks. Tools used in Finland, such as the FINRISK calculator, are good examples of validated methods.
- Digital solutions and artificial intelligence can support risk identification and personalized monitoring, but their implementation must address concerns related to ethics, law, data protection and accessibility.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

- Well-functioning and integrated care pathways, multiprofessional collaboration, and patient-centered solutions—including support for self-care and psychosocial support—are essential for effective treatment, reducing the risk for future cardiac events, and promotion of work and functional capacity.
- The availability and quality of cardiac rehabilitation vary across Member States. EU-level recommendations and resource allocation aligned with them can promote equity and treatment effectiveness.

Other Considerations

- Gender Equality: The recognition and treatment of heart disease in women remain inadequate. More research and education on gender differences are needed.

- **Vulnerable Groups:** The program should include specific measures to promote heart health among socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, the elderly, and those with immigrant backgrounds.
- **Research and Innovation:** We support EU-level investments in cardiovascular research, particularly in prevention, digital solutions, and personalized medicine.

The Finnish Heart Association recommends that the Commission's plan serve as a foundation for the national heart health program, which should include the following components:

- Population-level prevention
- Early identification of risk factors
- Equitable access to treatment and rehabilitation
- Strengthening the data base and monitoring effectiveness
- Multidisciplinary and multi-level collaboration, including the involvement of public health and patient organizations