



European
Commission

The EU 'Healthier Together' Non-Communicable Diseases Initiative

Reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases

International Diabetes Federation European Region

BACKGROUND

Provide the rationale and background for your proposed action including challenges and enablers.

"Unhealthy dietary patterns are directly linked to the current Global Syndemic consisting of non-communicable diseases, under nutrition and climate change. The dietary shift towards healthier and more sustainable plant-based diets is essential. It is acknowledged that plant-based diets may contribute simultaneously to improving population health as well as to decreasing the environmental impact of food systems. Evidence from cohort and randomized-controlled trials suggests that plant-based dietary patterns have beneficial effects on bodyweight control, cardiovascular health and diabetes prevention and treatment"¹.

Presently, diabetes impacts directly 32 million people live with diabetes in the EU plus twice that number with prediabetes. This figure keeps rising and is expected to reach 67 million in 2030. Among people with diabetes, good metabolic control to prevent complications is achieved by less than half of the patients, with modern food habits being recognised as a critical factor. In recent years, studies have shown that a more plant-based and less animal-based diet may lower the risk of progressing from prediabetes to diabetes, besides contributing to better outcomes in people with diabetes. Yet, despite recent international clinical guidelines having included a greater emphasis towards plant-based diets in diabetes, adoption remains low.

Such a dietary transition is hindered by a number of barriers that include lack of scientific consensus on recommendations, cultural traditions, socio-economic constraints, as well as behavioural and psychological hindrances. Dietary changes are not only difficult to implement but also to maintain.

1- [10.3390/nu15224723](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15224723)

2- <https://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/Heavy-burden-of-obesity-Policy-Brief-2019.pdf>

CONCRETE ACTION

- Idea:
 - *What are the objectives and the scope of the action?*

Our proposal aims at promoting the role and uptake of affordable and sustainable plant-based diets in the prevention and management of diabetes, to ultimately reduce premature death and disability from NCDs through sustainable healthy diets.

- EU added value and impact:
 - *What is the EU added value and impact of the action?*

One of the main objectives of the project is to produce evidence-based recommendations for Member States to put in place “healthy diets policies” that are lacking in most EU countries. As marginalised populations and people with a lower socio-economic status have a higher risk of poor nutrition/poorer eating behaviours, addressing a fair and equitable dietary transition to plant-based diets, that integrate the concept of territorial diets, like the Mediterranean and Nordic diets, would further support the move towards an equitable European Health Union, working for the well-being of all citizens in Europe.

The impact of the project will also take the form of networking and strengthening of cooperation between HCPs and patients’ association in and between EU countries. The project can also support a wider NCD/holistic approach by promoting further collaboration across diseases on one of the major risk factors of NCDs.

CHALLENGES AND ENABLERS

- *Which issues will your action address on health promotion and prevention of non-communicable diseases in particular related to health determinants, or socio-economic, environmental, commercial determinants of health?*

Despite convincing evidence of the critical role of healthy diets, very few countries have adopted/implemented efficient food policies. Additional barriers may further hinder the adoption of plant-based diets across Europe. For these to be successful, recommended diets should be culturally acceptable, accessible, equitable, economically fair and affordable.

How will this action support the prevention of non-communicable diseases?

How will it target challenges, and are there any enablers

A prerequisite to this is to understand the level of acceptance and barriers to adoption of plant-based diets across Europe, including those intrinsically related to socio-economic, environmental, commercial determinants of health. To be adopted, recommendations need to be co-developed by those who will have to implement/recommend them. Relying on an extensive network with lived experience will be one of the most impactful enablers.

*that can
take your
action
forward?*

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- *Provide your views on how your organisation can be involved and help in taking this idea forward.*

IDF Europe is an umbrella organisation of 72 national diabetes associations across 45 countries in Europe. Representing both people living with diabetes (PwD) and healthcare professionals (HCPs), it has access to a large network of experts, both with medical background and with lived experience of diabetes and will be willing/able to contribute to:

- Conduct a comprehensive literature review and surveys at national amongst HCPs and PwD
- Co-develop evidence-based recommendations
- Co-create educational material both with and for HCPs and PwD
- Organise educational workshops for HCPs and PwD
- Launch national and EU-wide webinars and campaigns
- Ensure outreach to policy makers
- Establish collaboration with other NCDs associations, such as CDV and obesity, as the programme would significantly also improve the prevention and management of these conditions.

*What can
your
organisation
do to put
this idea in
place?*

