

Brussels, 11 December 2025

Dear Christophe Hansen, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Dear Stéphane Séjourné, Commissioner for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy

Dear Piotr Serafin, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration

Dear Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth

Cc: Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Health & Animal Welfare

We are writing ahead of the publication of the Cardiovascular Health Plan next week to underline the importance of ensuring that it presents an ambitious, people-centered strategy with bold action on prevention.

From the [Association of European Cancer Leagues \(ECL\)](#) – the voice of national and regional cancer societies in Europe – we believe that **the Plan presents a critical opportunity to tackle the alarming rise in unhealthy diets**, as a shared risk factor for both cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and cancer, and as vital complement to the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.

Unhealthy diets contribute significantly to cardiovascular disease and cancer in Europe. **Both conditions are the main premature killers and are responsible** for almost half of the years lost to early death and disability from the condition. Low intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts, coupled with excessive consumption of salt, saturated fats, and animal products, directly increase the risk of all-cancers, heart disease, stroke, and related conditions, as well those concerning mental health, such as depression, anxiety and cognitive decline.

Addressing unhealthy diets is one of the most impactful and cost-effective ways to reduce cancer and cardiovascular disease burden across the EU, as well as related challenges such as diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, and widening health inequalities. **Policymakers have the legal mandate to ensure a high level of human health protection in all policies , and therefore that all Europeans can access and afford healthy, sustainable food.**

The recent leak of the draft Cardiovascular Health Plan has already prompted strong criticism from certain economic actors who profit from the production and sale of highly processed foods high in fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS). These actors are driven by commercial interests, not public health, and certainly not cancer or CVD prevention. They invest billions each year in increasingly sophisticated marketing strategies, product placement, and pricing tactics aimed at promoting such products.

The scale and systemic nature of these commercial determinants of health demonstrate clearly the need for **robust regulation that reshapes market conditions and creates an environment where citizens are not constantly nudged towards unhealthy and disease-promoting diets.**

This must include product reformulation, tighter rules on food marketing and advertising targeting children, fiscal policies (subsidies and/or taxes), public food procurement, all these policies recommendations also indicated in [the fifth edition of the European Code Against Cancer](#), and other measures that support healthier choices and protect public health.

According to [FAO](#), more than 70% of the “hidden” costs of agrifood systems in high-income countries stem from unhealthy diets, which drive not only the major non-communicable diseases (cancer and CVD) but also reduce labour productivity and exacerbate inequalities within our Union. These externalities place a significant economic burden on national budgets and individual wellbeing. **Addressing unhealthy diets is therefore not only essential for improving the health of Europeans but is also an economically bold imperative.**

As Commission services put the finishing touches on the Cardiovascular Health Plan, we urge you to **resist pressure from vested interests to dilute its level of ambition and ensure the Cardiovascular Health Plan builds on the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, positioning both as front-runners in the fight against premature death in Europe.**

We thank you in advance for your consideration,

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Wolfgang Fecke, Executive Director

Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

The [Association of European Cancer Leagues \(ECL\)](#) is a non-profit umbrella organisation made up of 35 national and regional cancer leagues advocating for improved cancer control and care across Europe. Our vision is a Europe free of cancer.

ECL is registered in the EU Transparency Register: Number 19265592757-25