

Written statement from IDF Europe to provisional agenda item 10 Progress report on Accelerating progress towards healthy, prosperous lives for all, increasing equity in health and leaving no one behind in the WHO European Region

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IDF Europe welcomes the adoption of the resolution EUR/RC69/R5, following the high-level conference on Accelerating Progress towards Healthy and Prosperous Lives for All in the WHO European Region, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 11–13 June 2019. We also commend the advancements made since, as outlined in the progress report, notably on the priorities to reduce widening health inequalities, not only as a moral imperative but also as a strategy that enables countries to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development.

IDF Europe agrees that there is a need for stronger partnerships and alliances within the health sector as well as with others such as the social and economic sectors to reduce health inequalities and ensure no one is left behind due to poor health and well-being. We also commend the efforts made by WHO/Europe to generate evidence on the importance of including equity in growth and development policies and to support Member States to strengthen the health sector's response to health inequities.

As acknowledged in the progress report, it is also crucial for policymakers in charge of addressing the determinants of health from various sectors to come together to address barriers and opportunities to common challenges such as the mental health and social inclusion of young people. The socio-economic determinants of health account for 50% to 60% of health outcomes, are a key contributor to health and health care disparities and play a determining role in the development of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as Type 2 Diabetes (T2D).¹ This is all the more important as NCDs represent a major public health challenge in Europe and their prevalence continues to rise. For example, the number of people living with diabetes (PwD) is forecast to increase from 61 million in 2021 to 67 million by 2030.² Numerous studies have shown that people with low socio-economic status are more likely to develop T2D, to experience more complications and to die prematurely. PwD with lower socio-economic status often face competing life priorities that affect the self-management of their condition, leading to poorer glycemic control and life-altering diabetes related complications, as well as heavy mental burden.

Effective prevention and management of NCDs, such as diabetes, is key not only to reduce health inequities in those living with these conditions but also to build more resilient and sustainable healthcare systems through lower costs and better use of resources to improve the quality of care, and ultimately reduce inequalities.

Increasing equity in health is not a minor endeavour though. To address the root cause of inequities, population health measures have to be implemented, engaging all relevant stakeholders, including people with lived experience and citizens at large. Mention of these is sorely lacking in the progress report, and we urge WHO/Europe and Member States to ensure that this engagement underpins all actions, if we truly want to see all citizens living prosperous lives.

IDF Europe and the entire diabetes community in Europe are ready to work with the World Health Organization and national governments to reduce the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases and health inequalities across the European region.

¹ <https://diabetesjournals.org/care/article/44/1/258/33180/Social-Determinants-of-Health-and-Diabetes-A>

² <https://diabetesatlas.org/>