

## **IDF Europe's response to the European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation's *Conquering Cancer: Mission Possible* report**

Brussels, July 1, 2020

IDF Europe would like to express its deep disappointment with the Interim report of the Mission Board for Cancer – *Conquering Cancer: Mission Possible*, published on June 24, by the European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation. While usefully outlining the way forward to help save and improve the lives of the many European citizens affected by cancer, in this report, **diabetes** is summarily described as a “lifestyle disease”, demonstrating a poor understanding of this complex condition and lack of respect for the 59 million people living with diabetes across Europe. The COVID Pandemic has also highlighted the increased risks of increased mortality and vulnerability of this population.

Diabetes is a chronic, life-long, condition, occurring when the body cannot produce the amount of insulin it requires, or cannot use it effectively. There are several different types of diabetes, the two most common ones being Type 1 diabetes (T1D) and Type 2 diabetes (T2D).

Type 1 diabetes is an auto-immune disease, which often develops in childhood, although it can affect people at any age. In people living with T1D, the body's defence system attacks the cells producing insulin, resulting in the body producing little or no insulin at all. People living with T1D require uninterrupted access to insulin to stay alive. *T1D cannot be prevented, and is believed to result from a combination of genetic and environmental factors.*

*Type 2 diabetes* tends to develop later in life and *shares a number of common genetic, physiological, environmental, and behavioural risk factors<sup>i</sup> with other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as certain types of cancer*, although not all diabetes risk factors have, as yet, been identified. *A number of Type 2 diabetes cases can be prevented by tackling the disease's modifiable risk factors, although several risk factors are beyond people's direct control.*

**Classifying even Type 2 diabetes as a lifestyle disease wrongly assumes that it simply results from the negligent behaviour of individuals and is solely their responsibility, and negates many facets and the complex nature of the disease.**

Taking action and fostering the conditions to help reduce the risk of diabetes and its complications is not, however, beyond the control of national governments and public authorities. There is strong evidence that the risk of developing T2D and diabetes complications might be substantially reduced<sup>ii</sup> with adequate prevention campaigns and the promotion of healthy lifestyles generally. Better health education, reduced socio-economic inequalities, adequate health system financing combined with improved primary healthcare and a generally person-centred healthcare system, and the development of health-enabling environments (e.g. improved urban planning and public spaces) also contribute significantly to improved prevention of Type 2 diabetes and diabetes complications.

## About IDF Europe

IDF Europe ([www.idf-europe.org](http://www.idf-europe.org)) is the European chapter of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). We are an umbrella organisation representing 70 national diabetes organisations in 44 countries across Europe. We are a diverse and inclusive multicultural network of national diabetes associations, representing both people living with diabetes and healthcare professionals. Our vision is to improve the lives of people living with diabetes and our mission to unite the voice of people with diabetes and engage all stakeholders in creating a person-centred diabetes ecosystem.

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## Facts and Figures on Diabetes

- Diabetes represent one of the main health burdens on European citizens, affecting more than 59 million people across Europe in 2019 (32 million people<sup>iii</sup> (one in 11 adults) in the EU alone).
- Diabetes and its complications were responsible for 465,900 deaths in adults in Europe in 2019, close to a third of which were estimated to be in people under 60 years of age, adversely affecting the productivity and efficiency of the European workforce and Europe's competitiveness<sup>iv</sup>.
- In 2019, total diabetes-related expenditure in Europe stood at €147.9 billion<sup>v</sup>.
- Close to 300,000 children and adolescents live with Type 1 diabetes across Europe, with more than 30,000 of new cases being diagnosed every year<sup>vi</sup>
- Type 2 diabetes is a significant contributor to the development of other NCDs. It increases the risk of having a heart attack or stroke, and people living with the disease have a two-to-three times greater risk of heart failure. More than half the people with diabetes die of cardiovascular events<sup>vii</sup>.
- End-stage renal disease is up to 10 times higher in people with diabetes<sup>ix</sup>.
- About 1 in 5 people with cancer also have diabetes<sup>x</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> Genetics of Diabetes and Its Complications, Stephen S. Rich, JASN January 2006, 17 (2) 353-360; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1681/ASN.2005070770>

<sup>ii</sup> Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016–2025 [https://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/346328/NCD-ActionPlan-GB.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/346328/NCD-ActionPlan-GB.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> International Diabetes Federation Atlas, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 2019. <https://www.diabetesatlas.org/en/>

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<sup>vii</sup> Nwaneri C, Cooper H, Bowen-Jones D. Mortality in type 2 diabetes mellitus: magnitude of the evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis. The British Journal of Diabetes & Vascular Disease. 2013;13(4):192-207 & Morrish NJ, et al. Mortality and causes of death in the WHO Multinational Study of Vascular Disease in Diabetes. Diabetologia. 2001;44 Suppl 2:S14-21

<sup>viii</sup> Einarson TR et al. Prevalence of cardiovascular disease in type 2 diabetes: a systematic literature review of scientific evidence from across the world in 2007–2017 Cardiovasc Diabetol. 2018; 17: 83

<sup>ix</sup> IDF: Diabetes and the kidneys <https://idf.org/our-activities/care-prevention/diabetes-and-the-kidney.html>

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-the-basics/related-conditions/diabetes-and-cancer>