

MEPs call for bold action to limit effect of pandemic on cardiovascular health

3 February 2021



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European and national decision-makers must act now to prevent further damage to cardiovascular health after the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's statement from the MEP Heart Group will be presented during an online meeting of European leaders.

The meeting is organized by the Members of the European Parliament (MEP) Heart Group, which is coordinated by the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the European Heart Network (EHN).

COVID-19 has a significant impact on cardiovascular [health](#) and the delivery of cardiovascular care. Even before the outbreak, [cardiovascular disease](#) (CVD) was the leading cause of death in Europe and the EU. More than 60 million people live with CVD in the EU and nearly 13 million new cases are diagnosed each year. The pandemic has aggravated this grim scenario, leaving many patients with new cardiovascular health conditions after recovering from COVID-19.1

Cardiovascular complications linked to COVID-19

are wide ranging and include cardiac injury, [heart](#) attacks, arrhythmia and progressive heart failure. Pre-existing cardiovascular diseases are particularly important predictors of in-hospital complications and mortality in patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

The MEP Heart Group calls for European and national decision-makers to:

- Develop separate pathways for the care of cardiac emergencies to reduce the risk of infection.
- Support clinical activity to prevent, diagnose and treat CVD.
- Support research on digital health technologies to manage CVD during the COVID-19 pandemic; on treatment options for COVID-19 patients with CVD, or at risk of CVD; and on the mechanisms by which SARS-CoV-2 infections impact the cardiovascular system.
- Invest in the collection of Europe-wide data on c

cardiovascular health.

The full statement of the Group is available on its website [here](#).

Maria da Graça Carvalho, MEP, co-chair of the MEP Heart Group said: "The repercussions of the pandemic on cardiovascular mortality and morbidity are likely to worsen rapidly unless bold action is taken. Improving [cardiovascular health](#) will have a crucial impact on the resilience of our healthcare systems."

Sandra Gallina, director general, DG Health, European Commission pointed out: "The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the need to invest in the fight against cardiovascular disease, but it has also shown us that Europe's strength lies in collaboration, solidarity, and unity of purpose.

Building on the lessons from the past 12 months, we have proposed to build a strong European Health Union, with more resilient health systems, so Europeans can benefit from their right to health and healthcare."

Professor Hugo Katus, ESC Advocacy Committee chair said: "An ESC survey showed that during the pandemic, many patients having a [heart attack](#) were too afraid to seek life-saving treatment due to fears of catching the coronavirus. We need to avoid this scenario happening again."²

Tuija Brax, EHN vice-president and CEO of the Finnish Heart Association said: "The [pandemic](#) has fast tracked widespread use of telemonitoring and teleconsultation for patients with cardiovascular disease. We call upon the EU to fund much needed research on the cost effectiveness of the measures most beneficial to patients."

Brando Benifei, MEP, co-chair of the MEP Heart Group said: "The COVID-19 outbreak has put a sharp focus on the weaknesses of healthcare systems across Europe and generated an unprecedented strain on hospitals and healthcare professionals. We now need to redesign healthcare delivery, take forward research, and translate innovative solutions into practice."

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

APA citation: MEPs call for bold action to limit effect of pandemic on cardiovascular health (2021, February 3) retrieved 22 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-meps-bold-action-limit-effect.html>

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