

“My heart, your heart”: Statement ahead of World Heart Day by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis

“Your heart and my heart, Are very, very old friends”, wrote 14th century poet Hafez. The poem honours human soul connection. It is therefore no surprise that the theme of this year’s [World Heart Day](#) that aims to create a global community of “Heart Heroes”, echoes the invisible links between people all over the world acting now to live better, longer, heart-healthy lives. I invite each of us to connect to our hearts and those of others and take care of them: by eating healthier food, exercising more, consuming less alcohol, saying no to smoking, and helping our loved ones to quit.

In the European Union, almost 49 million people live with cardiovascular disease, meaning almost every tenth person! In addition to the devastating consequences on the lives of individuals, cardiovascular diseases also pose a staggering economic burden to society – almost 210 billion euros a year.

Throughout my mandate I advocated for lifestyle choices by encouraging healthy nutrition through food reformulation, better protection of children and adolescents from too much exposure to marketing of foods high in energy, saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, sugars and/or salt, promoting public procurement of healthy food in schools. I know this work will continue.

In the [Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle](#), together with Commissioners Navracsics and Hogan we’ve made 15 commitments to promote healthy lifestyles through sport, food, innovation or research. Two years later, the first results clearly show that the Commission is using more funds, raises more awareness and gathers more knowledge to tackle unhealthy diets, obesity or physical inactivity.

The Commission also works with the Member States to support them in reaching the targets of the World Health Organisation and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), with an overall aim to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases. To meet these targets, we need much more focus on promotion and prevention, and we need to work across sectors and create stronger synergies between different EU programmes and policies.

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Still, more can be done: I call upon Member States to intensify their efforts on risk factors since many cardiovascular diseases are preventable. And, I also call upon each one of us individually: connect with your heart, keep it healthy.