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Leading policy-makers and nutrition experts call for EU-wide mandatory nutritional risk screening at EU NutritionDay Conference 2010

- **20 million EU citizens suffer from malnutrition;**
- **The health-related costs of malnutrition in the EU are estimated to be as high as 120 billion euros per year**

Today, at a Conference in the European Parliament, leading nutrition experts and policy makers urged governments to do more to tackle malnutrition in Europe by making nutrition an integral part of public health policies and disease management programmes for chronic and rare diseases. The Conference also called for mandatory nutrition risk screening for all hospital patients, comprehensive nutrition guidelines for all healthcare and social-care professionals, and asked that healthy hydration be built in to good nutritional care.

The Conference entitled *'Micro-Nutrient Deficiencies & Malnutrition: Solutions for Key Public Health Challenges'* brought together the European Nutrition for Health Alliance, the European Society for Clinical Nutrition & Metabolism (ESPEN), the European Parliament and the Belgian Presidency of the European Union.

Slovenian MEP Alojz Peterle, Co-Chair of the Parliament's Environment, Public Health & Food Safety (ENVI) Committee's Working Group on Health, and host of the NutritionDay Conference, stated:

"Malnutrition is associated with a whole host of public health concerns and chronic conditions – including obesity, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, some cancers and certain rare diseases- all of which place a considerable economic burden on healthcare systems, particularly as society continues to age. Malnutrition requires a cross-cutting solution; a good first step would be mandatory nutrition risk screening across Europe, on which I will encourage my colleagues to adopt a Parliamentary Resolution."

Professor Jean Nève, Chairman of the Superior Health Council of Belgium and panellist at the NutritionDay Conference, highlighted four key ways to ensure people get the right nutrients in their diet:

"Firstly, continue to promote healthy diets; secondly, further develop functional foods including fortified ones, which have the potential to play a role in supporting good nutrition; thirdly, promote the appropriate use of food supplements to reduce micronutrient deficiencies; and finally, ensure

the backing of governments and public institutions for large-scale intervention trials on nutrition and health."

ESPEN-affiliated Professors Cornel Sieber of Germany, Alessandro Laviano of Italy and André van Gossum of Belgium - all of whom spoke today – warned that:

"EU Member States still lack effective systems to address malnutrition, and the condition remains under-recognised and under-treated in Europe. We are measuring the health and economic impact of malnutrition in Europe, and the statistics are bleak. 20 million people in the EU suffer from malnutrition. In hospitals malnutrition affects 40% of all patients and in care homes it is even higher at around 60%. The health-related costs of malnutrition in the EU are staggering, at up to 120 billion euros per year. We therefore call on the European Union to recognise the serious impact of malnutrition on patients, professionals and healthcare systems, and to ask Member States to prioritise nutrition in their public health policies."

Frank De Man, the Secretary-General of ENHA commented that ***"Nutrition is a basic need. Let's treat it like one!"***

More information about Nutrition Day can be found on the websites of the European Society for Clinical Nutrition & Metabolism (ESPEN) http://www.espen.org, and the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) http://www.european-nutrition.org/record.jsp?type=event&ID=85.

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About ENHA

The European Nutrition for Health Alliance unites patients, practitioners, academics and industry to work together to call for malnutrition and nutritional care to be incorporated into EU public health policies and healthcare programmes. It aims to raise awareness, and promote and preserve good health by providing evidence-based information about nutrition and metabolism to policy makers, as well as support implementation of nutritional care programmes. For further information contact Frank De Man, Secretary General, frankdeman@newyield.nl, telephone +31 653 849 885.

Notes to Editors

- European NutritionDay 2010 was on 4 November.
- The Conference attracted around 80 participants.
- The Conference will feed into the Belgian Presidency's High Level Conference on *'Monitoring and evaluation of EU and national strategies on nutrition, overweight and obesity related health issues'* on 8-9 December 2010 in Brussels, and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council's (EPSCO) *Conclusions on Chronic Conditions* which are to be presented at its meeting on 6 December 2010.

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