



**Media release from the European Men's Health Forum
14 June 2010 - for immediate use**

EMHF calls on the EU to get active on sport and health

The European Men's Health Forum is calling on the EU and member states to mark International Men's Health Week 2010 (14-20 June) by getting active on men's health – and helping men get active too.

Under the Lisbon treaty, the EU is now developing its first ever policy on sport (1). The EMHF are asking that it include a strong social marketing element designed to raise awareness of the link between being physically active and being healthy.

EMHF president Professor Ian Banks said: 'With a recent Eurobarometer survey (2) showing that a third of Europeans don't take any exercise, the need to get Europe's 500 million citizens moving again has never been stronger.

'Three quarters of those polled in the survey admitted that there were opportunities to be active in their area so we're not asking for vast expenditure on new facilities or stadia, we are simply asking for encouragement, we're asking for an awareness-raising campaign. Many people just don't realise that taking no exercise at all is as dangerous as smoking.'

The EMHF is also asking that the new policy be fully-integrated with the EU's other policy areas. EMHF board member and former MEP John Bowis said: 'Sport is without doubt the neatest way to link men and exercise. So it is great we are to have the first EU policy for sport. But it must go further and link in to another new EU initiative that is coming on Healthy Ageing. Men need to go on closing the gender gap where longevity is concerned.'

The EU is asking for ideas on what it can do on sport, how it can link sport to health and how sport can aid social inclusion (3). Professor Banks called on men's health organisations across Europe to rise to the challenge and make their own suggestions.

Inactivity is expensive. Conditions related to obesity alone account for about 6% of national health care costs in Europe – more in many countries. (4)

Professor Banks concluded: 'With 13 European nations participating, many European men will be glued to their television sets during the World Cup watching some of the fittest men on the planet. But how many of those men will get up off their sofas to take some exercise themselves?

'For the EU, its new competency in the field of sport provides the perfect opportunity to help its citizens live happier, healthier lives despite the continent's financial difficulties and to save money on long-term health care too. A win-win situation – just like an all-European World Cup final, in fact.'

Notes to editors:

1. The European Men's Health Forum (EMHF) is the only European organisation dedicated to the improvement of men's health in all its aspects, operating as a platform for the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholder groups in Europe. It is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit-making organisation based in Brussels.

2. International Men's Health Week (IMHW) takes place annually in the second week of June which is the week leading up to father's day in the many countries worldwide where it is organised. Men's Health Week 2010 (14-20 June) is the eighth such week.

In many countries, including the UK nations, Hungary and Denmark, physical activity is a key theme of Men's Health Week 2010. In others, such as Italy, the theme is cancer. In the Netherlands it is sexual health. (5)

References:

(1) the Lisbon treaty which came into force in December 2009 gives the EU a new competency in sport. Further information and all the links at:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/742

(2) Eurobarometer survey: Sport and Physical Activity (March 2010). Further information and all the links at:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/738

(3) Further information and all the links at:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/742

(4) The challenge of obesity in the WHO European region and the strategies for response (2007)

http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/98243/E89858.pdf

(5) Further information and all the links at:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/744

Other links:

More on Men's Health Week across Europe:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/744

List of organisations working on men's health in Europe:

http://www.emhf.org/index.cfm/item_id/246

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