

PRESS RELEASE

New European Stroke Action Plan Urges Immediate National Action

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The updated *Stroke Action Plan for Europe* has been published in the *European Stroke Journal*, urging European governments to act now by implementing and funding comprehensive national stroke strategies in line with its recommendations.

This call for decisive action is reinforced by the recent [OECD report 'The State of Cardiovascular Health in the European Union'](#), which identifies stroke as the second leading cause of death from cardiovascular disease and a major contributor of acquired long-term disability.

Developed by the European Stroke Organisation and the Stroke Alliance for Europe, the Stroke Action Plan for Europe sets a clear roadmap for reducing the burden of stroke across Europe by 2030.

Building on progress made since the first Stroke Action Plan for Europe was launched in 2018, the revised document highlights both achievements and persistent gaps in care – particularly around prevention, emergency response, rehabilitation and life after stroke.

“The Stroke Action Plan for Europe is a wake-up call,” said Professor Simona Sacco, President, European Stroke Organisation. *“We know what works, and the nations of Europe now have an evidence-based blueprint for delivering high-quality stroke care. But without the political will and investment to implement national stroke strategies, too many people will continue to experience preventable deaths and life-changing disability.”*

The Stroke Action Plan for Europe is supported by the latest findings from the 2023 Stroke Services Tracker, which gathers data from 47 countries. While some countries have made significant progress since 2018 – including an increase in the number of national stroke plans – the data also reveal stark inequalities in, for example, access to acute treatments like thrombectomy, as well as long-term support for survivors.

- Only seven countries managed to achieve the recommended 'door-to-groin' time – the time from arrival in hospital to starting thrombectomy – of 60 minutes or less. In 12 countries, this delay was over 90 minutes, reducing the chances of a good recovery.
- Only 13 countries report having a dedicated programme for life after stroke and structured follow-up care remains rare, despite clear evidence of its importance for recovery and quality of life.

“Stroke is not only a medical emergency, it is a lifelong condition that demands a joined-up response,” said Professor Hariklia Proios, President, Stroke Alliance for Europe. *“Stroke is the second leading cause of death from cardiovascular disease and a major contributor of acquired long-term disability. The Stroke Action Plan for Europe gives governments and health systems a clear path to improve outcomes. Action on stroke must start now.”*

The Stroke Action Plan for Europe outlines clear targets in seven domains: primary prevention, organisation of stroke services, management of acute stroke, secondary prevention,

rehabilitation, evaluation of outcomes and life after stroke. It also provides measurable benchmarks that countries can use to monitor progress.

"A stroke changes your life instantly. What happens next depends on the systems built around us on community and country-level. The Stroke Action Plan for Europe is a crucial step toward ensuring that survivors across Europe receive the care and dignity they deserve." says Associate Professor Melinda B. Roaldsen, medical doctor and stroke scientist with lived experience.

SAFE and ESO are calling on national policymakers to work in partnership with people with lived experience, health professionals and stroke support organisations to implement the SAP-E and ensure equitable care for all.

Notes to Editors:

- The Stroke Action Plan for Europe (SAP-E) 2026 update is available in full via the [European Stroke Journal](#).
- The 2023 Stroke Services Tracker provides country- by country data on stroke care capacity and performance
- Download the [OECD report](#)
- [Download the EU CVH plan](#)

About the Stroke Action Plan for Europe and the Stroke Service Tracker

The Stroke Action Plan for Europe (SAP-E), launched in 2018, provides a strategic blueprint to improve stroke prevention, care and life after stroke support by 2030. In addition, the Plan directly supports the objectives of the newly published EU Cardiovascular Health Plan, which calls for stronger prevention, earlier intervention and more coordinated action across cardiovascular disease, including stroke.

The Stroke Service Tracker (SST) was developed as a monitoring tool to evaluate Europe's progress against the SAP-E targets, providing valuable insights for national stakeholders to drive improvements.

As reported in the recent 2025 [OECD report 'The State of Cardiovascular Health in the European Union'](#), stroke is the second leading cause of death from cardiovascular disease after ischaemic heart disease and a major contributor of acquired long-term disability.

Europe faces over 1.1 million strokes each year, causing nearly 460,000 deaths. Nearly 10 million people live with stroke's long-term effects. The economic burden is immense – over a 20-year period to 2040, the costs are projected to rise from €60 billion to €86 billion by 2040 without urgent reform.

The SST continues to be a vital instrument for mapping progress and exposing areas where countries fall short. It is a call for action, innovation and investment to ensure every stroke survivor in Europe has access to high-quality, timely and equitable care – no matter where they live.

About SAFE

The [Stroke Alliance for Europe \(SAFE\)](#) is a European-wide network of over 30 stroke support organisations. SAFE was set up as a European Patient Group in 2004 as a result of a European Parliament initiative calling on EU member states to tackle stroke as a preventable disease and is the voice of all those affected by stroke in Europe.

It is a non-profit membership organisation, working to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke in Europe through advocacy, campaigning, education, research and awareness raising.

SAFE's vision is a better future – a Europe where preventable stroke is eliminated, death and disability minimised, and every person affected by stroke lives their best life possible.

For more information about SAFE, please visit www.safestroke.eu.

About ESO

The [European Stroke Organisation \(ESO\)](#) is a pan-European society of stroke researchers and physicians, national and regional stroke societies, and lay organisations. The aim of ESO is to reduce the burden of stroke by changing the way that stroke is viewed and treated. This can only be achieved by professional and public education, and by making institutional changes.

As the voice of stroke in Europe, ESO works to improve prevention, treatment, and recovery by promoting professional excellence, public awareness, and policy change - driving progress in stroke care across Europe and beyond. ESO works towards the harmonisation of stroke management and to bring about political change, focusing on European level projects while working towards global solutions.

ESO serves as the voice of stroke in Europe, taking action to reduce the burden of stroke regionally and globally.

For more information about ESO, please visit www.eso-stroke.org.