

## Towards a more resilient ageing population in Europe: Building a Coalition on Structural Heart Diseases.

An event co-hosted by MEP Brando Benifei (S&D, Italy) & MEP Maria Da Graça Carvalho (EPP, Portugal)

On 1 March 2021, from 9.30 to 11.00 CET, an online event titled “Towards a more resilient ageing population in Europe: building a coalition on Structural Heart Diseases” saw the successful launch of the European Coalition on Structural Heart Diseases (SHD)<sup>1</sup>. The SHD Coalition is a European network that aims to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders including key opinion leaders, politicians, and patients to work together to ensure that policy on SHD is prioritised. The initial goal of the SHD Coalition is to work towards a [EU Joint Action on SHD](#) with an emphasis on awareness, early diagnosis and treatment.

With about 80 stakeholders attending the session, the event welcomed healthcare professionals as well as national and European policymakers from 7 EU Member States. The event was an opportunity for the policymakers to underline the need to put the right policy mechanisms in place to ensure every person with SHD receives a timely diagnosis and the treatment that is right for them, and to call for a coordinated approach across Europe. The event’s speakers highlighted ageism as a form of discrimination that can affect the detection and treatment of SHD and have deadly consequences on Europe’s elderly citizens.

The event, moderated by Tamsin Rose, Director Progress Works, was co-hosted by two Members of the European Parliament (MEP) **Brando Benifei** (S&D, Italy) and **Maria da Graça Carvalho** (EPP, Portugal) and also saw the participation of **Senator María Esther Carmona** (Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party, Spain), **Senator Sonia Fregolent** (Lega, Italy), **Member of the Parliament Annie Vidal** (LREM, France), **Member of the Parliament Steve McCabe** (Labour, UK), **Member of the Parliament Els Van Hoof** (CD&V, Belgium). Two healthcare professionals – **Professor José Zamorano** (Head of Cardiology, University hospital Ramon y Cajal, Madrid) and **Professor Doctor Hans-Jürgen Heppner** (President of the German Society for Geriatrics) set the scene by sharing their perspective on the burden of Cardiovascular and Structural Heart disease in an ageing population. Throughout the event, panellists were firm in their support for overcoming the numerous challenges associated with SHDs at both the national and European level.

The event concluded with MEP Carvalho (EPP, Portugal) calling for investment in the health of elderly citizens. She highlighted that policy addressing Structural Heart Diseases were not only a sensible option, but a social imperative geared towards ensuring elderly citizens can continue to participate in society and not burden it. She said that the coalition on Structural Heart Disease represents an ideal vehicle for action and act as the headquarters for a [campaign](#) spanning six countries and the European Union.

Age, she said, is an inescapable reality. When there are so many conditions we cannot cure or take on, we need to act on SHDs. Why? Because we can!

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<sup>1</sup> The European Coalition’s efforts on Structural Heart Disease can be consulted on the Coalition’s dedicated website at <https://structuralheartdiseasecoalition.eu/>. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Secretariat of the Coalition at [Secretariat@structuralheartdiseasecoalition.eu](mailto:Secretariat@structuralheartdiseasecoalition.eu) if you wish to support our efforts further.