

Press release

European Alliance for Lifestyle Changes kicks off in Brussels

Brussels, 17th December 2013

Today, the new **European Alliance for Lifestyle Changes** met for the first time in Brussels to discuss its objectives and action plan for 2014 aiming to place obesity and lifestyle much higher on the agenda of the EU.

Participants in the Alliance include Ms. Van Rompuy, Honorary Chair, MEPs Sophie Auconie and Antonia Parvanova, representatives of the Lithuanian EU Presidency, Prof. Frank Hu, Harvard University and a variety of experts in the fields of education, nutrition, sport industry, consumers and several healthcare sectors, uniting a broad range of stakeholders in the fight against obesity.

Obesity is a major public health challenge of the 21st century threatening society at large. However, through small lifestyle changes, by eating well, drinking well and moving more, substantial health benefits can be gained that would contribute to reduce expensive and life threatening complications. This requires joint efforts by all involved, decision-makers, academics, citizens and industry etc. - precisely the mission of the new Alliance.

The European Alliance for Lifestyle Changes is an initiative of the International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk (ICCR) and will be chaired by its Executive Director Jean-Claude Coubar. ICCR is world leader on research and education on a new form of obesity: abdominal obesity. Its research proves that the issue is not necessarily overweight but rather the location of the fat. This form of obesity is linked with the modern (European) lifestyle: an energy dense diet of poor nutritional quality and not enough physical activity.

ICCR's Scientific Director, Member of the Alliance and worldwide renowned scientist on abdominal obesity, Dr. Jean-Pierre Després, called today for more focus on changes in behaviour (nutrition, hydration and physical activity) rather than on weight loss. He pointed out that measurement of the waist circumference to check for abdominal obesity should urgently become routine across Europe to identify risks of cardiometabolic diseases, next to the Body Mass Index as the current practice.

The European Alliance for Lifestyle Changes presented today its four key recommendations:

1. Obesity as a marker of unhealthy lifestyle habits should be more emphasized at the clinical and public health levels;
2. Waist measurement is a marker of abdominal obesity and must be considered as a vital sign;
3. Obesity is also linked to hydration which needs to be translated into practice;
4. Regular physical activity produces important health benefits including reduction in the dangerous abdominal fat.

For further information on the European Alliance for Lifestyle Changes, please contact its Brussels-based secretariat at: +32 (0)2. 512.37.22 or by e-mail on: eatdrinkmove@russchen-consultants.eu.