PRESS RELEASE

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From Ottawa to Berlin: European doctors call for renewed action on prevention

How can the principles of health promotion be translated into effective action for healthier populations? Medical leaders from across Europe are discussing this question in Berlin this week at the General Assembly of the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), hosted by the German Medical Association (GMA). The meeting takes place against the backdrop of the 40th anniversary of the World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion.

The Ottawa Charter, adopted in 1986, established a broad understanding of health promotion: improving health is not solely the responsibility of healthcare systems, but requires action across society and across policy areas. Four decades later, many of the challenges remain, while new ones have emerged, from unhealthy food environments and tobacco and nicotine use to the impact of digital environments on children and young people. European doctors will use their meeting in Berlin to discuss what has been achieved – and where further action is needed.

"Prevention cannot be left to individuals alone. We know that the environments in which people live and the choices that are available to them have a major impact on their health," said Dr Klaus Reinhardt, President of the German Medical Association. "This is why we need effective policy measures that make healthier choices easier. The discussion around sugar taxation is one example: if we have evidence that a tax can contribute to healthier production and consumption, we should be prepared to use them as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy."

The importance of translating evidence into effective policy is also reflected in tobacco control. While European countries have made significant advances in reducing tobacco use, new nicotine products and new marketing strategies are creating additional challenges, particularly among younger people.

"Europe has made important progress in tobacco control, but we cannot afford to become complacent," said Dr Ole Johan Bakke, President of CPME. "A new generation of nicotine products is reaching young people. The revision of the EU tobacco framework is thus an

important opportunity to strengthen tobacco control and protect the next generation from nicotine addiction."

Dr Bakke added, "Doctors play a vital role in advancing the principles of the Ottawa Charter for the next 40 years, both in shaping policy and in clinical practice. For example, family medicine plays a central role in preventive care and health promotion by providing continuity, identifying health risks early and supporting people to protect their health throughout their lives."

As part of the CPME General Assembly, the German Medical Association's annual "BÄK im Dialog" event on 13 November will bring together experts from medicine, public health, science, and policy to discuss the achievements and remaining challenges of the Ottawa Charter, as well as concrete approaches to prevention. These include the experience of the United Kingdom with a tax on sugary drinks, measures aimed at achieving a smoke-free generation, and approaches to protecting children and adolescents in an increasingly digital environment. Speakers will also discuss the role of evidence and health literacy in making prevention more effective and equitable.

The discussion will form part of a wider exchange during the CPME General Assembly, which takes place in Berlin from 12 to 14 November 2026. Representatives of national medical associations from across Europe will meet to discuss common challenges and priorities for the medical profession and public health.

Note to editors

*The **German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer)** is the joint association of the 17 State Chambers of Physicians, which are registered corporations under public law. It represents the interests of all physicians in Germany in matters relating to professional policy and plays an active role in opinion-forming processes with regard to health and social policy and in legislative procedures.*

*The **Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)** represents national medical associations across Europe. We are committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues.*