

Vienna becomes the headquarters of the united European nutrition expertise: Foundation of the Society of European Nutritionist Associations (SENA)

With the foundation of the Society of European Nutritionist Associations (SENA) in 2022 in Vienna as its European umbrella organization, European nutritionist associations will start joint work for profound nutrition knowledge in Europe.

Nutrition is individual, and relevant to everyone every day. Food systems and food issues are relevant across the EU and affect core European policy issues such as public health, climate change, food ethics as well as food production and supply.

Nutrition science is a discipline based on natural sciences that critically examines all aspects of human nutrition that meet human needs and works for people's individual and societal well-being by involving other disciplines in the subfields of health, social welfare, ecology, technology, production and economics.

Nutritionists advance the state of nutrition science and put nutrition knowledge into practice as professionals, traditionally organized in national nutritionist associations.

The continental perspective of nutrition issues requires a European response - the Society of European Nutritionist Associations - SENA. As the umbrella organization of European nutritionist associations, SENA will pursue three main aspects:

- 1. Promotion of the nutrition-related public welfare for the support of the health of the general public through the advancement of nutritional sciences.*
- 2. Quality-assured work of nutrition scientists to provide evidence-based nutrition information to the public.*
- 3. Support for nutritional policy decisions to optimize food quality as well as the dietary behavior of the general population, with particular attention to sustainability and climate change aspects.*

These aspects have a significant impact on the European population.

Nutrition and Health

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a heavy burden on Europeans. The top five diseases (diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental disorders) account for approximately 86% of deaths and 77% of the burden of disease in Europe. The EU addresses them with an integrated approach to prevention and health systems strengthening across sectors and policy fields.

Thereby, managing nutrition-related diseases is a key across Europe, but it is elusive. On the one hand, there is a growing number of overweight people, however, on the other hand there is an increasing number of malnourished people too, which also comprises the overweight. In addition, mental health-related eating disorders continue to rise, and nutritional problems caused by demographic change are increasing enormously. Availability and access to qualified nutrition expertise is necessary to address these challenges.

European food security and sustainability

Currently, European eating habits cause about one third of emissions that contribute to climate change. Food waste (about 1 million tons per year in Austria alone) fuels the squandering of vital resources, and the loss of biodiversity is increasing dramatically. In Europe, disruptive changes due to the pandemic and the military conflicts highlight the importance of sustainable food systems and the urgency of joint initiatives to achieve national and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Expertise, networking, quality assurance

Nutrition topics need European expertise. SENA, an European umbrella organization for nutrition scientists with headquarters in Vienna, was created in order to use experiences across Europe synergistically. SENA will serve as the network among nutritionists across Europe to enable the exchange, network and collected expertise of nutritionists, who develop competent solutions to (European) questions on nutrition topics.

A (SENA-registered) nutritionist is a person with an academic degree in nutritional science who can critically investigate, assess, provide and disseminate scientific evidence-based information and guidance about food and nutrition and its impact on the health and wellbeing of humans at an individual and/or population level, whilst complying with ethical codes of conduct. This accelerates and promotes European exchange at a high professional level.

The founding members of SENA are Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The association's headquarters is located in Vienna.

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