

Launch of new European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma

Brussels, 25 March, 2015 – Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), patients, doctors have joined forces in an Interest Group to take actions on allergy and asthma in Europe that will be launched on March 25 at the European Parliament.

Under the leadership of MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen (Finland, EPP), the Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma will strive to give a clearer policy response to address allergy and asthma at the EU level. The Interest Group will serve to share expertise and help align interests to trigger EU policy actions on allergy and asthma health. Members of the Group will provide a strong and unified contribution to EU policies on chronic diseases, air pollution, and research among others.

The Secretariat of the Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma will be run by the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) in partnership with the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) and will work closely to voice the needs of people living with allergy and asthma.

Over 150 million EU citizens live with allergies but half of them are underdiagnosed or have their disease uncontrolled. Around 30 million people in Europe have asthma and as many as 6 million of these people suffer severe symptoms. Allergy and asthma are amongst the most prevalent chronic diseases in Europe, although many patients do not report their symptoms or are not correctly diagnosed.

Patients and doctors expect that such a dedicated Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma will help develop a network of MEP ambassadors supportive of research on the causes of allergy and asthma, prevention treatment and management of these diseases, as well as raising awareness of the growing incidence of asthma and allergy in Europe. The Group will also be proactive in promoting a better quality of life and access to care of the patients. The European Commission health-related services, Member States health and research attachés, industry representatives, patients groups, academia and the public health community in general will be the key contributors to the Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma.

MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen declared: "Besides the need to ensure quality care for the allergy patients in Europe, we also need to establish national and EU-wide strategies to tackle the root causes of allergies, such as biodiversity loss, bad air quality and over-use of hygiene products".

EFA President Breda Flood declared: "Allergic patients are often neglected by healthcare systems. We are thrilled to join this European Parliament Interest Group. Together, we will help raising the profile of allergy and asthma to ensure the needs of people living with these diseases are included into EU policies".

EAACI President Nikos Papadopoulos declared: "Many actions are needed if we are to contain the allergy epidemic, including research, improvement of medical services and public health programmes. Today, a major step forward has been taken! The EU Parliament understands the size of the problem and is responding".

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European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) patients organisations, representing 38 national associations in 24 countries and over 400,000 patients. Visit www.efanet.org for more information.

European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes over 8,500 members from 121 countries, as well as 49 National Allergy Societies. Visit www.eaaci.org for more information.