



PRESS RELEASE

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POOR TREATMENT OF PAIN IN EUROPE CAN NO LONGER BE IGNORED, NOW IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

Experts converge for action on the societal impact pain.

Brussels, Belgium – Chronic pain affects one in five Europeansⁱ and leaders in the field of pain have had enough of EU inaction. Yesterday, experts, stakeholders and decision makers at EU and national level came together at the annual Societal Impact of Pain symposium to discuss some of the most important issues in the field of pain and bring concrete solutions to the table.

There are currently no comprehensive pan-European figures outlining the impact of pain on society. However, some studies are beginning to illustrate the magnitude of this problem. For example, the direct and indirect costs of musculoskeletal pain, which causes almost 50% of all absences from work lasting at least three days in the EU and 60% of permanent work incapacity,ⁱⁱ have been estimated at €240bn each year- up to 2% of GDP across the EUⁱⁱⁱ.

EU and national politicians are being asked to acknowledge the size of the societal impact of pain, and to change policies to improve pain care for the benefit of European society.

Chris Wells, President of The European Pain Federation (EFIC) declared: *“SIP 2016 is a great leap forward for our work in finding policy solutions for better pain care in Europe. Working with European patients’ groups, MEPs and Commission officials brings us in to the heart of the EU political process”*

Alberto Grua, Member of the Grunenthal Corporate Executive Board stated: *“It is great to see SIP 2016 bring together different national perspectives on pain care from countries such as Italy, Germany, and the UK. Everyone has something positive to share and hopefully many lessons can be learnt”*

Experts were joined by Members of the European Parliament in four workshops that delved into four critical issues related to pain:

1. The lack of clear indicators to measure pain effectively across Europe, which are crucial to granting access to cross-border health care and evaluating organisational improvement in pain management.
2. The failure of many doctors and policy-makers in recognising that in some cases, chronic pain can be seen as a disease in its own right, rather than as a symptom of another illness. This is very important in establishing effective pain management plans.
3. Pain occurs in more than 70% of patients with cancer^{iv} and effective pain management should be an integral part of cancer treatment and palliative care.



4. Pain prevalence is associated with reduced workforce participation and increased direct and indirect costs on society, yet effective treatment can help people reintegrate into the workforce if they so choose.

Joop van Griensven, President of Pain Alliance Europe stated: *“It is fantastic to see such wide interest in the societal impact of pain this year, from MEPs, the Commission, national governments, payers, and healthcare professionals. Most importantly, the patient voice is considered important in order to improve policies and therefore the quality of life of chronic pain patients”*

Mariano Votta, Director of Active Citizenship Network noted: *“The Cross-border Healthcare Directive should be the gateway to allowing all patients the opportunity to avoid unnecessary pain. Discussions today gave us inspiration on how to see the Directive’s full implementation”*

The 2016 SIP symposium continues today, as participants agree on concrete policy recommendations which will be ratified and proposed to decision makers both at EU and national level. High level speakers will include Giovanni La Via MEP, Chairs of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee in the European Parliament and Alfred Sant MEP, former Prime Minister of Malta.

The scientific framework of the SIP symposium and platform is under the responsibility of the European Pain Federation EFIC®. This year’s edition sees for the first time the formal cooperation of the patient community, represented by Pain Alliance Europe (PAE), and the civil society, represented by Active Citizenship Network (ACN), partners for SIP 2016, further providing added value in addressing the topic of the societal impact of pain. The pharmaceutical company Grünenthal GmbH is responsible for funding and non-financial support (e.g. logistical support).

Over 240 international and national pain advocacy groups, scientific organisations and authorities have endorsed the scientific aims of previous SIP symposia and meetings. The objectives of this year’s SIP Symposium have been endorsed by over 160 pain advocacy and scientific organisations.

ⁱ Breivik H, Survey of chronic pain in Europe: prevalence, impact on daily life, and treatment, European Journal of Pain 2006; 10 (4): 287-333

ⁱⁱ Fit for Work Foundation, Reducing Temporary Work Absence Through Early Intervention: The case of MSDs in the EU, 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fit for Work Foundation, Reducing Temporary Work Absence Through Early Intervention: The case of MSDs in the EU, 2013.

^{iv} Breivik H, Cherny N, Collett B, de Conno F, Filbet M, Foubert AJ, Cohen R, Dow L. Cancer-related pain: a pan-European survey of prevalence, treatment, and patient attitudes. Ann Oncol. 2009 Aug;20(8):1420-33. doi: 10.1093/annonc/mdp001. Epub 2009 Feb