



Member of the European Parliament (MEP)
Mrs. Françoise Grossetête
European Parliament
60, rue Wiertz
B-1047 Brussels, Belgium

Brussels, the 15th of May 2012

Dear Mrs. Grossetête MEP,

On behalf of the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations ([EFA](#)), we are writing to you as the *Rapporteur* of the report on the "Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020" at the European Parliament (EP).

Seeing as you have already collaborated with us in support of one EFA workshop on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) at the European Parliament on the 29th of June 2011, you know that EFA is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients' organisations, representing 34 national associations in 21 countries and over 400.000 patients. EFA is dedicated to making Europe a place where people with allergies, asthma and COPD have the right to best quality of care and safe environment, live uncompromised lives and are actively involved in all decisions influencing their health.

The [Commission proposal on the third multi-annual programme of EU action in the field of health](#) presents positive novelties and features an increased budget, from 321 to 446 million EUR; however, the text can be improved. First of all, **EFA welcomes your proposal to change the title of the programme into "Health and Growth."** Even if the rationale behind the Commission proposal is to avoid cuts in the health budget due to the crisis, emphasising the aspects related to the creation of jobs and the contribution to a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth in line with the [Europe 2020 strategy](#), **health cannot be subordinated to economic development.**

In addition, we very much appreciate your **focus on prevention** by mentioning the main risk factors. In Europe, 97% of health expenses are spent for treatment and care, while only the remaining 3% is dedicated to prevention.¹ However, together with "smoking, abuse of alcohol, a sedentary lifestyle, an unhealthy diet and obesity" as cited in your report, EFA would like to emphasise **the hazard of the exposure to second-hand smoke and the need for a good indoor and outdoor air quality.** This cross-sector approach was proposed by the Commission in its **Health in All Policies (HIAP)** strategy and we believe that it must be strengthened: **all EU policies should contribute to, and certainly not counter-act the protection and improvement of the health of the European citizens.**²

EFA would like to **congratulate you for mentioning, among the general objectives of the Programme, the necessity to address the challenges of the ageing** of the population, in line with the [2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generation](#), and the **increase in chronic diseases.** Indeed, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that chronic diseases are the leading cause of mortality in the European region, accounting for 86% of all deaths and for 77%

¹ European Commission, *White Paper "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013"*, 23 October 2007, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/Documents/strategy_wp_en.pdf.

² Ibid.

of the Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs).³ In addition, supporting the Council's vision, EFA would like to emphasise that another important objective of the new Programme should be **the reduction of health inequalities between and within Member States.**

Finally, we agree on the fact that the need to cope with chronic diseases is **not only limited to cancer, but it has to take into account all major diseases.** COPD is a progressive disease that affects almost 10% of all adults (210 million people worldwide and 44 million people in Europe). Currently ranked at number 6 of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) mortality list, it will be the 3rd leading cause of death by 2030 while remaining an unknown disease to most people.⁴ Around 30 million people in Europe have **asthma**, and as many as 6 million of these people suffer symptoms characterised as severe. At the present, **respiratory allergies** affect around 20-30% of the European population, while 1 in every 2 Europeans will suffer from an **allergy** by 2015.⁵ In addition, **asthma and allergy are the most common chronic diseases in children.**

The total annual **financial burden of lung disease** in Europe amounts to nearly 102 billion EUR and COPD accounts for almost one half of this figure. In addition, COPD accounts for more time off work than any other illness and each year it is estimated that 32.8 billion EUR are lost due to reduced productivity of COPD patients. The total cost of asthma in Europe is 17.7 billion EUR per year, and productivity lost to patients' poor control of their asthma is estimated at 9.8 billion EUR per annum.⁶

The Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) addressed this crucial issue with its [Council conclusions on "Prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of chronic respiratory diseases in children,"](#) unanimously adopted by the EU Ministers of Health on the 2nd of December 2011 as well as [Council conclusions on closing health gaps within the EU through concerted action to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours.](#)

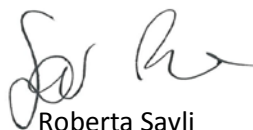
As representatives of people with allergy and respiratory diseases in Europe, we are providing opportunities this year for our members to learn from comprehensive national programmes on our disease areas, and are happy to share this expertise with the whole Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Breda Flood

EFA President EFA



Roberta Savli

EU Policy and Project Officer

³ Summary report of the meeting UNDESA/WHO Regional High-level Consultation, Addressing non-communicable diseases: major challenges to sustainable development in the 21st century, 25-26 November 2010, available at: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/140739/NCD_Mtg_Oslo_Apr2011_SumRep.pdf.

⁴ In 2010, EFA launched its [Book on COPD in Europe – Sharing and Caring](#) and corresponding Call to Action for Europe at the European Parliament. Based on this, EFA organised two separate workshops on COPD at the European Parliament on the 29th of June and the 9th of November 2011.

⁵ Last November 2011, EFA launched its [Book on Respiratory Allergies](#) and the [Call to Action "Raise Awareness, Relieve the Burden"](#) at the European Parliament.

⁶ Ibid.