**Brussels, 6 May 2013**

**PRESS RELEASE: Help! Europe’s expertise in allergy is at risk**

By 2040 every second patient in the EU will suffer from some type of allergy. Despite the fact that allergies affect more than **60 million people** in all European countries, there is **an alarming deficit and growing disparity** in the number of allergists and number of severe allergy patients. In many European countries there are not enough allergists and general practitioners who are able to diagnose the disease at an early stage. This extremely worrisome trend has to be changed.

On this **World Asthma Day** of May 7, 2013 the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patient's Associations (EFA), the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (EAACI), the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) and Allergic Rhinitis and Its Impacts on Asthma (ARIA) are handing over an **Allergy Alert Paper** to the **European Commission** and to the **ENVI Committee** of the European Parliament.

**EFA, EAACI, UEMS** and **ARIA** jointly request the European Commission and the European Parliament to endorse **changes to healthcare systems across Europe** in order to help patients suffering from allergy to have a proper diagnosis of their disease. Nowadays, primary care practitioners (PCPs) are the ones who are seeing allergy patients most routinely. However, they often **lack the knowledge in allergy** and don’t understand how a proper diagnose can improve the quality of life of their patients.

“We are therefore requesting **one single model of education** for physicians European-wide which will help building a base for earlier diagnosis of allergy. PCPs have to be included in allergy education to be able to identify that a patient is at risk, manage the first diagnosis and send difficult cases to a specialist,” EFA president Breda Flood explains. If by 2040 every second citizen in the EU suffers from allergy and PCPs are unable to recognise and treat this disease, then we would need many more specialists.

In order to improve the care of patients and relieve the pressure mounting on medical community in Europe, which is deprived of adequate education in the field, the European Commission and the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament should introduce **the following fundamental changes to healthcare systems** across Europe regarding pre- and postgraduate medical education:

1. The formal recognition of a full medical specialty in Allergology and of a formally recognized sub-specialty of Pediatric-Allergology throughout all EU member countries.
2. The increase in quality and the harmonization of education for allergists and PCPs.
3. The development and implementation of an educational model of Allergology in Medical Schools across Europe.

According to the Global Allergy and Asthma Network of Excellence, it is estimated that the annual cost of asthma in Europe is over € 18 billion and allergic rhinitis may cost up to € 100 billion. Recognition of a common educational curriculum in all EU countries and the harmonization of education for allergologists across Europe would thus bring benefits not only to allergy patients, but also to society. Mutual recognition of Allergology among all Member states could be the first step.

**Help EFA’s effort to relieve the burden of respiratory allergies on European societies by signing the** [**Call to Action**](http://www.efacallaction.net/sign.aspx) **today!**

**About EFA**

Patients and their needs and rights are at the heart of everything we do. The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients Associations (EFA) was established in 1991 as a European network for patient associations specialising in allergy and asthma.

We work on behalf of patients to:

1. Promote awareness of allergies and airways diseases among policymakers and the
2. General public.
3. Broaden our understanding of these conditions by increased collaboration between national patient associations.
4. Share knowledge and experience to beneficially educate both the public and EFA members.
5. Promote patient concerns and opinions within the European institutions and enable national patient associations to gain representation at EU level.
6. Improve their health and quality of life.

**Contact information:**

Tereza Reznakova

EFA EU Policy and Programme Assistant Rue du Congrès 1000 Brussels Belgium

Tel.: +32 (0)2 227 2712

E-mail: info@efanet.org

**www.efanet.org**