

A European Innovation Partnership for Asthma Searching for Cure for Asthma in Europe

Asthma in Europe: time for change

Today, we can address a problem that affects over 10% of people in Europe. We can take advantage of Europe's existing research facilities and political institutions to save lives and transform people's lives by building a European Innovation Partnership for Asthma. With this tool, we have the opportunity to cure a disease that affects millions of people for a lifetime.

An unsolved problem

Asthma has become an unacceptable disease for Europe. Today, asthma affects over 30 million people in Europe across every age group and throughout every part of society. It is the most prevalent long-term condition for children, affecting up to 30% of children in some European countries. We often think of Europe as an exemplar of public health in the world. Yet today, 14 of the world's 20 worst countries for asthma prevalence are in Europe.¹ There is no cure. Treatment options are limited. Many people have little control over their condition.

A multidimensional burden

Whilst these facts are alarming in their own right, asthma also puts a heavy burden on Europe's economic prosperity and growth prospects. The total economic cost of asthma in Europe is estimated to be more than €25 billion annually.² Pharmaceutical costs stand at €3.6 billion per year alone and health care services at a further €4.3 billion per year.

At an individual level, asthma disproportionately affects those with a low socioeconomic status. It affects a large number of people education and working lives, seriously inhibiting their economic prospects and employment opportunities. Treatments and policies vary widely both within and between nations. A recent survey of asthma care showed that people in London are twice as likely to miss out on basic asthma care as those in other parts of the UK. This disparity reinforces existing inequalities and stagnates social mobility.

Asthma places an unacceptable social and economic burden on Europe that we cannot ignore any longer.

Political priorities of the European Union

The European Union has reiterated its political commitment to addressing asthma. Successive Presidencies of the European Union have made commitments to addressing childhood asthma, most recently in the Council Conclusions of the Polish Presidency (2011), which called for member states to address premature deaths from asthma. These conclusions were comprehensively accepted among EU Ministers for Health. We cannot lose sight of this momentum. It's our responsibility to take this vision forward and to realise the aims put in place by successive presidencies of the Council of the European Union.

European Innovation Partnership for Asthma

Our moral obligation to address asthma has been clear for some time. We now have the opportunity to fulfil this obligation by establishing a European Innovation Partnership for Asthma and delivering radical change.

The European Union has some of the best research institutes and personnel in the world. Yet our lack of coordination lets us down. By putting asthma at the forefront of Horizon 2020, we can establish changes in asthma research and policy that would deliver better treatments, reduce asthma deaths and ultimately cure asthma.

The scale of the challenge ahead of us necessitates a unified approach. We must break down the silo-thinking that has stymied progress in the past and we must commit to driving the asthma agenda forward by taking advantage of the political momentum for change.

We are already coordinating a stakeholder partnership for bringing about a European Innovation Partnership for Asthma with the support of the European Commission. Our responsibility now is to unify Europe around our vision for a European Innovation Partnership.

We want you to play a role in transforming the lives of millions of people. Please join us.

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¹ The Global Burden of Asthma Report May, 2004

² Calderon et al. Clinical and Translational Allergy 2012, 2:20