What can you do?

Sign the declaration
The written Declaration on COPD needs the support of the majority of MEPs. That means it needs your support. This growing health issue needs to be on the political agenda now. Are you ready to help Europe fight COPD?

These MEPs already are:
Catherine Stihler  (UK, PSE)
Paulo Casaca  (Portugal, PSE)
Avril Doyle  (Ireland, EPP-ED)
Gérard Onesta  (France, Greens-EFA)
Jerzy Buzek  (Poland, EPP-ED)

Don’t stop there
There are many ways to keep Europe safer from COPD. Here are some of them:

• Support anti-smoking laws
• Work for better health and safety
• Combat pollution
• Encourage public education
• Promote early and correct diagnosis
• Back research

"Breathing problems have plagued me for many years, but it was only recently, when I was hospitalised for an exacerbation, that I was diagnosed with COPD and given treatment. I feel very frustrated, but I want to improve my condition." Giovanni, 56, Italy
Some facts about COPD

COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) is a preventable and treatable disease that mainly affects smokers and ex-smokers aged over 40. COPD causes disability, which gets gradually worse. Eventually, people with COPD need oxygen therapy and ventilation support.

- By 2020, COPD will be the third-largest cause of death worldwide.
- COPD killed 2.7 million people in 2000.
- Up to three-quarters of people with COPD have difficulty with simple tasks such as walking upstairs.
- COPD is more common in men than women, although this may be changing.
- COPD is associated with many other health problems, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer.
- Because COPD is under-diagnosed, it is hard to know exactly how many people suffer from it.
- A recent global study found that about a quarter of 52-60-year-olds in Salzburg, Austria and Krakow, Poland have COPD.
- Smoking is not the only risk factor: environmental tobacco smoke and pollution are also linked to COPD, as is the common genetic disease α1-antitrypsin deficiency.
- As the population ages, COPD will become a bigger problem.

"By 2020 COPD will be the third-largest cause of death worldwide. We must do our utmost to stop the spread of this preventable, treatable and chronically overlooked and underfunded disease." Catherine Stihler MEP

Putting COPD on the map

The impact of COPD across Europe

Finland About half of patients die within 5 years of their first hospital admission for a COPD exacerbation

Estonia There is little or no data on the impact of COPD

UK Among men, unskilled manual workers are 14 times as likely as professionals to die of COPD

Ukraine COPD-related health costs total £280m per year

Ireland COPD accounts for 1 in 20 deaths

France Only 8% of people aged over 45 know the term ‘BPCO’ (French for COPD)

Spain Up to 78% of COPD patients may remain undiagnosed

Italy COPD results in more than 1 million days of hospital stay per year

Greece 3.4% of 35- to 49-year-old smokers or ex-smokers have COPD

Austria COPD is more prevalent in women aged 40 to 59 than in men of the same age

Czech Republic Women account for an increasing proportion of COPD deaths

Lithuania Although four times as many men as women smoke, COPD rates are similar for both sexes

Sweden COPD is more common in men than women, although this may be changing.

"The coughing I have found very hard to handle as it happens at the most inappropriate times - when I'm teaching, meeting new people, during dinner with my colleagues and students." Jonas, 61, Lithuania

"I try to live as normally as possible and have oxygen with me wherever I go. I can do the groceries, but can no longer take care of my youngest grandchild as I do not have the strength to take her in my arms any more." Gunilla, 64, Sweden

Hungary In 2006, 2.1% of the population was newly diagnosed with COPD

Netherlands COPD-related health costs total €280m per year

Data kindly provided by members of the Forum of European Respiratory Societies and EFA.