

17 February 2006

*Dear Member of the European Parliament,*

RE: The Proposal for the EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients Associations (EFA)<sup>1</sup> is a network of 28 allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) patient organizations in 17 countries across Europe committed to improve the health, quality of care and participation of patients with these diseases.

We are writing to you on behalf of the European allergy, asthma and COPD patients to express our deep concern that allergic and respiratory diseases which are a major public health problem, cost for European economies and place substantial limitations to peoples' well-being and quality of life are not included in the proposed list of major diseases in the proposal for the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research.

One in four Europeans has some form of respiratory allergy<sup>2</sup> and experts estimate that 1-7 suffer from food allergies, 1 in 10 infants has atopic eczema and one in five infants develop asthma. Allergic symptoms vary from mild to life threatening and can have a devastating impact on patient's day-to-day life, their families, and school, professional and social life<sup>3</sup>. Every hour at least one person dies of asthma in Western Europe<sup>4</sup>. The impact of asthma on a patient's life can be frightening: Once a week, one in four Europeans with asthma have attacks so severe they cannot even call out for help<sup>5</sup>. In financial terms, asthma alone costs Europe € 17,7 billion per year<sup>6</sup>.

It is estimated that by 2015, one in two Europeans is likely to suffer from at least one form of allergy.

4-10 percent European adults are affected by COPD<sup>6</sup>; it is little known and is often left undiagnosed. Up to almost three out of four patients with COPD report difficulty in the simplest of everyday activities, being out of breath after simply walking upstairs<sup>7</sup>. It is devastating, disabling and irreversible disease and accounts for almost half of the total European financial burden of lung disease of € 102 billion (€ 118 per capita).

COPD is the only leading cause of death that is increasing in prevalence in the world, and due to become the third most common cause by 2020.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information <http://www.efanet.org>

<sup>2</sup> National Prevalence of Respiratory Allergic Disorders. R. Dahl et al. *Respir Med* (2004) 98, 398-403

<sup>3</sup> Patient Voice Allergy Survey. EFA. 2005. <http://www.efanet.org/enews/documents/AllergysummaryreportFINALdata220605-onsitea.doc>

<sup>4</sup> World Health Report 2003, Shaping the Future. World Health Organisation.

<sup>5</sup> Fighting for Breath – A European Patient Perspective on Severe Asthma Survey. EFA. 2005.

[http://www.efanet.org/activities/documents/Fighting\\_For\\_Breath1.pdf](http://www.efanet.org/activities/documents/Fighting_For_Breath1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> European Lung White Book. European Lung Foundation and European Respiratory Society. 2003.

<sup>7</sup> The burden of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. P. Vermeire. *Respir Med* (2002): 96(Suppl C): S3-S10

Given the economic and social burden of allergy and respiratory diseases, it is vital that they are among the priorities in the FP7 to ensure that these diseases be the object of a more targeted and health policy driven research strategy in the Programme.

Together with the EFA, we urgently ask you to speak and vote on behalf of our patients with these diseases, and thereby improve the health related quality of life of millions of Europeans and future Europeans.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information or clarification – we would be happy to help and to meet with you or provide documentation.

Yours sincerely,



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