



Brussels, 15 November 2006

*European COPD patients and pneumologists mark World COPD Day and welcome the launch of a written declaration in the European Parliament calling upon the EU to pay more attention to this under-recognised and under-funded killer.*

The European Respiratory Society (ERS), the European Lung Foundation (ELF) and the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) welcomed the launch today of a written declaration in the European Parliament on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. The written declaration was launched by Scottish MEP Catherine Stihler and calls upon the EU and Member States to pay more attention to the condition. COPD is currently the fourth biggest killer in the EU and is predicted to become the third biggest killer worldwide by 2020. Despite this, COPD continues to be under-diagnosed and under-funded at both national and European level. The ERS and EFA have been campaigning for almost two years to have respiratory disease included in Framework Programme 7 for Research. Following strong and consistent support from all groups in the European Parliament they are hopeful that the EU Research Ministers and the Commission will support the Parliament's amendment and include respiratory diseases in FP7 when they meet to agree the final programme at the end of this month.

Professor Bill McNee, President of the ERS said, "COPD is a serious condition which is simply not recognised for what it is by most national governments. Many people live with the disease for years before they are diagnosed and suffer a massive reduction in their quality of life. There is a very great need to get the message across to governments and research funders that COPD rates are increasing across Europe and bringing misery and economic hardship to millions of people. We welcome the declaration and very much appreciate the European Parliament's staunch support for more recognition and funding for respiratory disease over the last two years."

Svein-Erik Myrseth, President of the EFA also welcomed the declaration and endorsed its recommendations. "There is still a preconception that COPD is not a major killer and that if you don't smoke you can avoid it. The truth is that COPD can also be caused by exposure to certain occupational hazards and non-smokers can also be affected as a result of breathing in other people's smoke. If you are a continuous smoker, the latest research suggests that up to 25% of all smokers will eventually suffer from the condition.

European Lung Foundation Chair, Prof Laurent Nicod said: "With European smoking prevalence rates of 30% we are talking about an awful lot of people who will need treatment over the next thirty years and many of them will be women. Europe's governments need to start developing national COPD strategies now if we are going to reverse this trend. These strategies should include the adoption of comprehensive tobacco control policies to promote smoking cessation and more funding into research for early diagnosis and effective treatments. "

## Notes to Editors

### **The European Respiratory Society (ERS)**

The ERS is a not-for-profit, international medical organisation with over 8,000 members from 100 countries and was founded in 1990. It is the largest society in Europe in its field. The main objective of the society is to promote respiratory health in Europe in order to alleviate suffering from respiratory diseases. This is accomplished by promoting basic epidemiological and clinical respiratory research, collecting and disseminating scientific information, organising congresses and conferences, producing scientific publications, supporting training and continuous education in respiratory medicine and collaborating with organisations representing patients.

### **The European Lung Foundation (ELF)**

The ELF is the public voice of the ERS and the only pan-European foundation dedicated to lung health. Its aim is to serve the European Community by sharing scientific expertise in respiratory medicine with the public. This is done by providing better support for lung diseases and its related risks, and informing decision-makers in policy, business and media. The ELF draws together the leading European medical experts to provide patient information and raise public awareness about respiratory disease.

### **The European Federation of Allergy and Airway Diseases Patients Association (EFA)**

EFA is a European network of allergy, asthma and COPD patient organization that was founded in 1991. EFA's mission is to draw together a European community of patient organizations which share responsibility for substantially reducing the frequency and severity of allergies, asthma and COPD, minimising their societal implications, improving health-related quality of life and ensuring full citizenship of people with these conditions, as well as pursuing equal health opportunities in the field of allergy and airways in Europe.

A copy of the EP declaration can be accessed at [www.ersnet.org/brussels](http://www.ersnet.org/brussels)

The main objectives of the declaration are:

- To call on the European Commission and Council to list respiratory diseases (including COPD) under the major disease category under FP7;
- To call on the EU to facilitate long-term epidemiological studies of the frequency of, and the mortality from, COPD
- To urge the EU to develop smoking cessation strategies
- To urge the Commission to publish a green book on in-door air

### **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)**

COPD is a condition which causes gradual restriction of airflow and consequent difficulty in breathing. Because of this, shortness of breath, cough and sputum production are common symptoms in COPD. Approximately 200,000-300,000 people die each year in Europe because of COPD. Among respiratory diseases, COPD is the leading cause of lost work days, and it is estimated that in Europe productivity losses due to COPD amount to a total of €28.5 billion annually.

More information can be found at: [www.european-lung-foundation.org](http://www.european-lung-foundation.org)

The European Parliament will be holding a vote on FP7 on 29<sup>th</sup> November.

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