

## Press release

### Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) session – EFIC Congress

“The classification of chronic pain as a condition  
and what it means for policies and health systems”

**Copenhagen, Friday 8th September, 12:00**

“*If you manage pain, you manage the healthcare system*” was the key message from the Societal Impact of Pain plenary session that met at the **EFIC Congress** in Copenhagen. The tenth annual congress brings together 3000 participants to discuss the pressing issue of pain in health systems and the need to address the impact of pain in society.

The conversation was taken forward by pain experts, who were welcomed by Thomas Tölle (European Pain Federation, EFIC®) who underlined that: “*healthcare systems in the European Union need to be managed differently and one way legislators can do this is by focusing on the societal impact of pain*”.

Bart Morlion, President Elect (European Pain Federation, EFIC®) presented the Societal Impact of Pain Platform (SIP), the advocacy strategy of the platform and its 2017 achievements. Within these the recent launch of the European Commission Expert Group on the Social Impact of Pain and the European Council conclusions that made chronic pain a priority area for action stood out as the two key achievements of SIP this year. “*Chronic pain is now firmly on the agenda. We need to make sure it stays there*” Morlion concluded.

Prof. Rolf-Detlef Treede the representative for Germany of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) gave a presentation on chronic pain as a condition or symptom. Prof. Treede stated that: “*Pain is one of the most significant causes of disability and suffering worldwide. The classification of chronic primary pain as a disease by the WHO could start a chain reaction that improves pain care across Europe.*”

Participants heard from MEP Marian Harkin’s advice on what to expect from politicians addressing the societal impact of pain. MEP Harkin presented the initiatives taken in the European Parliament to include pain in health, social and employment policy, and emphasised the extremely important role of SIP at European level in raising awareness on the social impact of pain. Over 200 MEPs co-signed a written declaration calling to adapt policies to secure access to employment of those who suffer from pain. MEP Harkin finalised her intervention with a motivational speech aiming to “support action and collaboration at member state level, by sharing best practices and coordinating among initiatives. Progress might be slow but we know we are moving in the right direction”

Liisa Juttila, from Pain Alliance Europe (Finland), further added to the debate the patient perspective and stating clearly that “*to be able to deal with the urgent needs of patients it is fundamental that chronic pain is taken more seriously by governments and health systems*”.

Robert Jakob, World Health Organisation, presented the new International Classification of Disease process - ICD 11 and chronic pain. Improving pain management should go hand-in-hand with the measurement of pain; that is to say the quality of the services should be measured. Mr. Jakob stressed the need to start using ICD 11 “*prepare now for ICD 11, give us your comments, try it and start*”.



The meeting was successful and discussed in depth the pressing issues around pain in health systems, the definition of pain and its measurement. A unifying and clear message came across: all pain experts agree on the need to address the impact of pain on society now.

SIP is an international, multi-stakeholder platform created as a joint initiative of the European Pain Federation, EFIC® and Grünenthal with the aim to raise awareness of the relevance of the impact that pain has on our societies, health and economic systems, exchange information and sharing best-practices across all Member States of the European Union and develop and foster European-wide policy strategies for an improved pain management in Europe (Pain Policy). Since 2011, the SIP platform hosts delegates representing European institutions, policy makers, pain specialists, scientific researchers, patient representatives and other stakeholders to discuss policy issues related to the societal impact of pain.

