

## “Structured cooperation to tackle the Societal Impact of Pain”

Dear Participants of SIP 2017,

In October 2016, I started as the Global CEO of Grünenthal, a science-driven pharmaceutical company with a strong commitment to innovations in pain indications. Pain has many faces. It can be pulsing, aching, sharp, dull or even drilling.

Even when comprehensive pan-European data quantifying the effect of pain on society are missing, what we know already is deeply concerning. Pain is one of the most common reasons for which people seek medical attention. The estimated direct and indirect healthcare costs for chronic pain disorders in European Member States vary from 2 % to 3 % of GDP. For 2016 this estimate would result in 294 – 441 billions of €. This is an impressive sum.

Pain is a healthcare problem impacting functioning and quality of life, associated with sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, among many other symptoms. For pain as a health condition, expertise is spread unevenly across the EU member states. Quality standards on postoperative pain and access to pain therapy are urgently required. Patients dealing with headache, in need of cancer pain treatment or palliative care often have poor access to adequate pain treatment. For patient’s daily suffering with complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), Bladder Pain, Vulvodynia, Spina Injury or fibromyalgia adequate treatments need to be developed.

Hurdles for patients to access adequate pain therapy include lack of training of medical professionals, restricted resources and access to medicines, cultural attitudes as well as regulations and policies not addressing the societal impact of pain. However, these hurdles are not unconquerable. They can be addressed by working together. If all stakeholders involved join forces we can achieve a lot to relieve the societal impact of pain for both: the individual patients and society.

At Grünenthal we consider it our responsibility to develop innovative solutions in pain treatment. Our scientists have defined a pain landscape containing over 100 different pain conditions. Many of these indications are yet to be fully understood and often lack a proper medical treatment. Therefore we see it as our commitment together with patient representatives, academia and policy makers to develop new life changing innovations bringing benefit to patients in areas with a high unmet medical need. With this in mind I was impressed when I heard first time about the fantastic platform “Societal Impact of Pain” (SIP). SIP is an outstanding initiative where patient representatives, healthcare professionals, politicians, insurances, health authorities, regulators and budget holders are working closely together in a structured way. The SIP platform builds a strong foundation to raise awareness, exchange information and best practices and to develop and foster policy strategies & activities for an improved pain care in Europe.

The SIP 2017 symposium is a great chance to bring multiple stakeholders together to evaluate and discuss the societal consequences of pain and to consequently follow-up on the policy recommendations from the previous year’s events. This year’s meeting is a special event as it takes place under the auspice of the agenda of the 2017 Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU. The frame of the Maltese presidency gives the societal impact of pain an enormous potential for political attention. Inspired by the Maltese presidency **“Structured Cooperation between Health Care Systems tackling the societal impact of pain!”** has been chosen as the title for SIP 2017 which underlines the ambition to really make a difference.

On behalf of Grünenthal I am very proud to be part of this initiative to welcome you to this unique event. I would like to thank all who have been involved in the preparation of this impressive event, especially the many involved at the European Pain Federation EFIC®, Pain Alliance Europe (PAE), Active Citizenship Network (ACN), Malta Health Network (MHN), the No Pain Foundation and our sponsors Alliance for Patient Access (GAfPA) and the German Maltese Medical Society (GMMS) as well as the sponsors supporting the initiatives of ACN and PAE during this event. But most of all I thank you, participants of SIP 2017 for your effort and dedication to address the societal impact of pain. The excellent cooperation of all SIP partners is a benchmark for national and European initiatives to striving for a consistent pain policy.

I wish you fruitful discussions and a very successful SIP 2017.



**Gabriel Baertschi**  
Global CEO of the Grünenthal Group



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