

## Call to action: MAKING BRAIN HEALTH A PRIORITY FOR EUROPE

Hundreds of millions of people of all ages, across Europe and globally, struggle with neurological disorders in their everyday lives, from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, strokes, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy to migraines, brain injuries, brain tumours and neuro-infections

In fact, at least 1 in 3 people will experience a brain disorder – either neurological or mental - in their lifetime. The annual cost in Europe is €800 billion – more than all other major disease areas combined<sup>1</sup>. Brain disorders constitute the most burdensome disease group among NCDs in Europe.<sup>2</sup> Neurological disorders, alone, form the world's largest cause of disability and the second of death, with a 36.7% increase in the period 1990-2015.<sup>3</sup> These numbers will continue to grow as the European population ages and as there is no cure for most brain disorders, as yet.

To counteract this enormous burden, sufficient priority and resources must be provided for disease prevention and mitigation, management and treatment,

In the Political Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases, which arose from a UN High-Level Meeting in 2018, all Governments recognized that *'mental disorders and other mental health conditions, as well as neurological disorders, contribute to the global burden of NCDs*. 'Mental health' was added as the '5<sup>th</sup> NCD', complementing global efforts to combat cancer, CVD, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases.

Despite a number of EU initiatives in this field, a broader, long-term and strategic portfolio of work in the area of neurology and brain health is urgently needed to counteract the disease burden.

Therefore, we call upon the European Commission and Member States to:

- **Acknowledge and use latest data** demonstrating the exceptionally high burden of brain disorders in terms of mortality, disability, prevalence and economic impact.
- **Give more visibility and priority to neurological health**, as per the enlargement of the scope for NCDs that was adopted at the 2018 UN High Level Meeting on NCDs.
- Give more attention to improving **brain health, as a whole**, in European and national policy priority settings. As such, the EU should **develop a unified strategy to promote brain health** Europe's Beating Cancer plan could serve as a useful template in this regard.
- Support the **development of National Brain Health Plans** in EU countries.
- **Increase investment in brain research and innovation** to better understand the brain; and to treat and cure its diseases.

This Call to Action is the framework within which an advocacy strategy will be developed with concrete actions and desired outcomes. For more information email: [advocacy@efna.net](mailto:advocacy@efna.net)

Supported by MEPs:

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**Miriam Dalli**, Vice-Chair, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats [S&D]

**Frédérique Ries**, Vice-Chair, Renew Europe [Renew]

**Kateřina Konečná**, European United Left–Nordic Green Left [GUE/NGL]

**Tilly Metz**, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance [Greens - EFA]

<sup>1</sup> The economic cost of brain disorders in Europe. Eur J Neurol. 2012; 19(1):155-62 (ISSN: 1468-1331). For comparison with other disease areas see:

Economic burden of cancer across the European Union: a population-based cost analysis (2009)

European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics (2012)

Economic Impact of Diabetes (2010)

<sup>2</sup> Raggi A, Leonardi M, Burden of brain disorders in Europe in 2017 and comparison with other non-communicable disease groups, Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry

<sup>3</sup> (Lancet Neurology. 2017;16(11):877-897).