



71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 13-17 September 2021

Item of the agenda “Matters arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board”

Written statement

European Federation of Allergies and Airways Diseases Patients Associations (EFA) on behalf of the European Lung Health Group (ELHG)

Lung disease is the third cause of death worldwide. However, lung health remains a largely hidden domain of life where people have to live with the often-preventable consequences of other people's decisions. In Europe, lung disease kills 600,000 people each year, and provokes over 10 million life years lost, numbers that do not take into account deaths and consequences from COVID-19, which is an infection of the respiratory system.

Regrettably, there has been a historical lack of policy attention for lung health at the European level. Today, we call on WHO Europe to set goals that will improve the key causes of ill health, such as air pollution and tobacco use. It is urgent to translate the increased awareness of the vulnerability of lung health, painfully experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, into actions that effectively address respiratory disease in Europe. Lung health professionals and services, at the forefront of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic since the very beginning, have often worked with scarce resources and disrupted services, deeply affecting patients care and health.

In response to agenda item “Matters arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board” on the 71st Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, EFA takes the opportunity to comment on the items WHA74.16, WHA74(10), WHA74(11), and propose the shared Vision of the European Lung Health Group (ELHG) to attain better lung health.

Breathe Vision for 2030: A Europe where everyone can breathe

Breathe Vision for 2030 is an initiative of the European Lung Health Group, a newly established collaboration between European-level patient and healthcare professionals' organisations that have joined forces to voice the changes that the lung health community wants to see by 2030.

Together, we urge WHO Europe to include our Vision into the future of health and sustainability, the definition of actions to prevent disease whether they are chronic, infectious, or rare, and the prioritisation of funding to address the causes and consequences of these diseases, as well as to advance research.

- **The approach to healthcare policy should pivot towards preventing disease.** We urge WHO Europe to promote primary prevention by addressing key risk factors such as air pollution and tobacco; while supporting secondary prevention, including increased screening and pulmonary rehabilitation, particularly for rare respiratory diseases and lung cancer.
- **We envision care as a wheel** where better follow-up leads to improved clinical guidelines, to better integration of real-world evidence in clinical trials, and finally to better health and patient-reported outcomes. We call on WHO Europe to establish measurable progress in equal access to the best respiratory care and treatment across Europe.



- **Our lungs face new challenges because of climate change.** We urge WHO Europe to be a strong advocate for lung health in all international fora, to streamline lung health across international policies and treaties.
- Particularly in our first few years as children, **lung health is a key factor in everyone's health later and in predicting future health.** We call on WHO Europe to foster a prevention approach to respiratory disease that guides policy making decisions.
- **Europe should be at the forefront of research into respiratory health.** We call on WHO Europe for a commitment to support research, education and new approaches to treatment and the management of disease.

Overall, we urge WHO Europe and its Member States to join us in realising that lung health, particularly from an early age, is a key part of our well-being and is an equally large part of current ill health in our society. More measures need to be taken more quickly, in partnership with the lung health community.

Co-signed by:



European Federation of Allergies and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)



European Respiratory Society (ERS)