

72st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 12-14 September 2022

Item of the agenda "Progress reports – Agenda item 14. Implementation of the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016–2025"

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

Atopic dermatitis/eczema (AD/E) is considered the most common inflammatory skin disease affecting up to 20% of children and adolescents worldwide¹. In Europe, its prevalence has steadily increased over the last four decades². Patients carry a heavy burden that impacts their physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being³.

Despite its prevalence, AD/E is not covered in policy frameworks and actions addressing non-communicable disease (NCDs), as the current Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016-2025, whose progress is discussed in item 14 of the Regional Committee 72' agenda.

While there have been new advances in how the disease is understood and managed, innovations and access to services and new therapy remain crucial for patients. The seriousness of AD/E is poorly understood by many, limiting progress in addressing the quality-of-life issues.

It is time to change this precarious situation and to recognise that AD/E is a complex chronic disease, and that patients require long-term treatment and multidisciplinary care to cope with it. EFA, representing people living in Europe with AD/E, calls on Member States to follow the consensus path below⁴ in order to make sustainable changes in healthcare systems and reduce the AD/E burden:

- **Introduce structural changes in national health systems** to enable healthcare systems adapt their focus away from merely diagnosing the disease, to include multidisciplinary care and support for patients and families, reinforcing the role for specialised nurses, psychologists, pharmacists and nutritionists.
- **Ensure the respect of the newest clinical guidelines**, establishing an agile system of referral for AD/E patients that clearly defines responsibilities between healthcare professionals, granting a statutory right to referral for each patient diagnosed with AD/E in the European region.
- **Adopt a new clinical approach**, where AD/E diagnosis is not static but adapts based on the developing condition of the patient and latest scientific evidence, incentivising healthcare systems to seek the right patient pathway based on response to treatments and quality of life indicators.

¹ Kowalska-Olędzka E, Czarnecka M, Baran A. Epidemiology of atopic dermatitis in Europe. J Drug Assess. 2019;8(1):126–8.

² Ibid

³ European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA), *Itching for Life: Quality of Life and costs for people with severe atopic eczema in Europe*, 2018 http://www.efanet.org/images/2018/EN_-_Itching_for_life_Quality_of_Life_and_costs_for_people_with_severe_atopic_eczema_in_Europe_.pdf

⁴ European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA), *The Burden of Atopic Eczema: European Consensus Report 2022*, 2022 http://www.efanet.org/images/2022/EFA_Burden_of_Atopic_Eczema.pdf



European Federation of Allergy and Airways
Diseases Patients' Associations

Written statement

We call on WHO Europe to integrate atopic dermatitis / eczema in all policies addressing the prevention and care of NCDs and to prioritise action in the framework that will follow-up from the current 2016-2025 Action Plan.