

Open Letter to the EU Permanent Delegation to the World Health Assembly

EU's support to the Skin diseases as a global health priority resolution

Brussels, 15 April 2025

Dear Ms Knudsen, Head of Delegation,
Dear Mr Beviglia Zampetti, Minister-Counsellor,
Dear Ms Stankevičienė, Counsellor,
Dear Ms Brent-Petersen, Counsellor,
Dear Ms Fohgrub, Counsellor,
Dear Mr Widstam, Counsellor,

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is the European-wide organisation representing over 200 million people living with allergy, atopic dermatitis/eczema (AD/AE), asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

In view of the upcoming 78th World Health Assembly, taking place between 19 and 27 of May in Geneva, **EFA calls you to support and co-sponsor the draft resolution 'Skin diseases as a global public health priority'**,ⁱ which is to be considered for adoption during the meeting.

Skin diseases are often overlooked, despite they profoundly impact public health and individual and family well-being. In 2021, there were over 4,69 billion cases of skin diseases worldwide, encompassing more than 3,000 identified conditions. The socio-economic burden of skin diseases, compounded by the growing impact of climate change, places them among the top 10 causes of disability globally.

Atopic dermatitis/eczema (AD/E) is the most common inflammatory skin disease, affecting up to 20% of children and adolescents across the world. It develops predominantly in early childhood and may persist in adulthood. In Europe, the prevalence of AD/AE in European adolescents aged 13–14 years of age oscillates between 1.5% in Lithuania and 15% in Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, and Hungary.ⁱⁱ When the AD/E is severe, almost 1 in 2 adult patients in Europe still experience severe symptoms despite treatment.ⁱⁱⁱ

The draft resolution on **'Skin diseases as a global public health priority'** proposes to address all skin diseases in an integrated manner, emphasising the following elements:

- **Targets all skin diseases**, including allergies, inflammatory diseases, autoimmune diseases, genetic diseases, vascular diseases, cancers, infections (viral, bacterial and fungal) and rare autoinflammatory diseases.
- **Prioritizes the perspective of patients and their caregivers** in all aspects of healthcare planning and implementation.
- Bolsters local production of **generic medications**, leading and facilitating skin-health **research** and improving **healthcare training** towards increased health equity.
- **Proposes a WHO Global Action Plan** to establish a framework for addressing skin diseases globally, focusing on prevention, early detection, effective treatment, and long-

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term care, with specific targets. It will also provide guidance for developing national and regional policies, promoting multisectoral collaboration, and aligning with global health priorities such as UHC and the SDGs.

- **Calls for dedicated health investment** to expand expertise, particularly among primary health care workers, enabling them timely diagnosis and effective support for those living with skin diseases.

Given the European Union's continuous leadership in achieving universal health coverage and your commitment to address non-communicable diseases through the European Commission Healthier Together Initiative, we believe your involvement can significantly **amplify this critical health issue on the global stage** and **foster effective strategies to mitigate the burden of skin diseases worldwide and in Europe**.

We therefore encourage you to:

- support Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo, Micronesia, Egypt, China, and Colombia, in bringing this resolution forward,
- circulate our petition to adopt the resolution among Member States,
- consider issuing an EU statement during the WHA advocating for the prioritisation of skin diseases on EU's health policies and research initiatives.

We firmly believe that the **EU has a unique power for improving skin disease prevention and care**, sharing knowledge and best practices and steering research and community action grants.

We would be delighted to have a meeting with you ahead of the vote, to present the work of our federation for chronic inflammatory skin disease patients.^{iv}

We thank you in advance for your consideration and look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Marcia Podestà, EFA President

Susanna Palkonen, EFA Director

Isabel Proaño, EFA Director of Policy and Communications

ⁱ Draft decision proposed by Cote d'Ivoire, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nigeria and Togo Agenda Skin diseases as a global public health priority, item 9, EB156/CONF./9, Feb 2025:

https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB156/B156_CONF9-en.pdf

ⁱⁱ Kowalska-Oleńska et al, Epidemiology of atopic dermatitis in Europe, J Drug Assess. 2019 Jun:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6566979/>

ⁱⁱⁱ 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 Sep: https://www.efanet.org/images/2018/EN_-_Itching_for_life_Quality_of_Life_and_costs_for_people_with_severe_atopic_eczema_in_Europe_.pdf

^{iv} European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA), The Burden of Atopic Eczema, European Consensus Report, 2022 Sep: <https://efanet.org/inform/patient-evidence/atopic-eczema-consensus-europe/report>