

## **EULAR: ‘European Union must enable people with chronic conditions to remain active in social and economic life’**

**Brussels, Belgium, 16 October 2019: The European League Against Rheumatism, EULAR, today launches a vision paper that urges the new European Commission to take immediate action regarding chronic diseases – and to bring new dynamism to the area of health.**

Addressing an audience of 150 delegates, EULAR President Professor Iain McInnes and Members of the European Parliament will today call on the European Commission to prioritise actions that improve access to quality health care and which help to prevent chronic diseases. Professor McInnes comments, “The estimated direct costs associated with RMDs stand at 2% of the EU’s gross domestic product alone. Unless there is immediate action, the European Union risks failing the lives of people across the union at the economic, health and social levels. EU health policies need to be designed to help people with chronic diseases remain active in social and economic life.

“The European Commission has a responsibility to act with immediate effect; it should be strongly committed to support the Member States in reducing the burden of chronic, disabling conditions including rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases.”

EULAR’s vision paper focuses on the future of health policies. It stresses the need to ensure proper coordination between the area of health and other policy areas such as employment and social affairs, as well as the environment. Coordination is crucial in order to better address health challenges and the consequences they carry for the social and economic integration of people with chronic diseases; without effective integration, there is no opportunity to curb the growing strain that these diseases are placing on society – and on the individual taxpayer.

Professor McInnes continues, “These are diseases with painful and functionally detrimental consequences that affect one quarter of the EU’s population, making them the main cause of work loss, absenteeism and premature retirement. As a result, these diseases are silently and negatively impacting on the European economies as they are placing a huge – and growing – strain on European societies and their taxpayers.”

Theresa Griffin MEP stressed the need for a strong EU in the area of public health: “The Commission President-elect has rightly defined the fight against cancer as one of her priorities. The Commission has the capacity to also prioritise the fight against other major chronic diseases such as musculoskeletal diseases, which affect millions of people in Europe and have an enormous impact on individuals, their families and on our health and social security systems.”

MEP Manuel Pizarro commented, “We must find a new paradigm in political action and combine medical competence with the vision of politics. The European Union poses many opportunities and allows us to reach

across borders, sectors and levels of society. The EU should abandon its timid attitude and be a strong partner of the Member States in the fight against chronic diseases.”

### **About the EULAR Brussels conference**

EULAR President Iain McInnes will today host the debate, ‘A sustainable and effective EU health policy for citizens: Focusing on chronic diseases and inclusion in social and economic life’ in Brussels. The conference brings together EU and national policy makers, patient organisations, health professional associations, scientific societies and health and social organisations from across Europe. Workshops will include access to healthcare, managing chronic diseases in the life course, coordination between health and social affairs policies. Launched in 2010, the EULAR Conference in Brussels is held every October and coincides each year with the globally celebrated awareness day, World Arthritis Day.

### **About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases**

*Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can also affect the muscles, other tissues and internal organs. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting both children and adults. They are usually caused by problems of the immune system, inflammation, infections or gradual deterioration of joints, muscle and bones. Many of these diseases are long term and worsen over time. They are typically painful and limit function. In severe cases, RMDs can result in significant disability, having a major impact on both quality of life and life expectancy.*

### **About EULAR**

*The European League against Rheumatism (EULAR) is the European umbrella organisation representing scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with RMDs. EULAR aims to reduce the burden of RMDs on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of RMDs. To this end, EULAR fosters excellence in education and research in the field of rheumatology. It promotes the translation of research advances into daily care and fights for the recognition of the needs of people with RMDs by the EU institutions through advocacy action. [www.eular.org](http://www.eular.org).*

### **Press contact**

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### **EULAR Vision paper**

A copy of the EULAR vision paper is available from the EULAR Brussels Office, [brussels@eular.eu](mailto:brussels@eular.eu)

### **Video address: Watch the conference teaser**

Get ready for the EULAR Brussels conference with Professor Iain McInnes here:

<https://youtu.be/Vgrr32WZj5o>

## **EULAR TV: Follow the conference over livestream**

Follow the conference over livestream on the day at <https://www.youtube.com/user/eularorg>

## **Social media: #EULARBrussels2019**

Follow the discussion on Twitter using the hashtag #EULARBrussels2019 @eular\_org

## **Notes to Editors**

EULAR Strategy: [https://www.eular.org/eular\\_strategy\\_2018.cfm](https://www.eular.org/eular_strategy_2018.cfm)

EULAR School: <https://esor.eular.org/>

EULAR Campaign: [https://www.eular.org/eular\\_campaign.cfm](https://www.eular.org/eular_campaign.cfm)

EULAR Recommendations: [https://www.eular.org/recommendations\\_home.cfm](https://www.eular.org/recommendations_home.cfm)

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