

**Press release:**

**EULAR calls for Horizon Europe budget increase to meet citizens' needs**

**Brussels, Belgium, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018: The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) has issued a call to the European institutions together with the biomedical research community to make Horizon Europe a success for Europe's long-term health. Recognition of the positive return on investment from health research and innovation is crucial, as demonstrated by a recent study showing that every Euro invested in research on rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases delivers a return equivalent to around 25 cents year-on-year. A dedicated conference hosted by EULAR entitled 'Bringing chronic diseases to the forefront of health innovation: From the lab to individualised health care', is held today to mark this call and provide concrete recommendations into the policy-making process.**

Speaking at the conference, EULAR President Professor Johannes W. J. Bijlsma told the audience, *"It is crucial to recognise the economic impact of health research and innovation, with RMDs as one of the most beneficial in terms of economic return<sup>1</sup> that generate employment and which ensure Europe's position as the global health research centre. It is key to the future of over 120 million EU citizens affected by RMDs, as well as to the future of all EU member states."*

The call recognises the need to place focus on biomedical research in chronic diseases: Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) alone constitute annual costs of up to 2 percent of national GDP, and are the greatest cause of disability in the EU at almost 30 percent. Participants and speakers at the conference widely support the Horizon Europe proposals, especially the continuation of success stories such as the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. Participants also back the call to increase the overall budget and prioritise funding for health research and innovation in order to alleviate the every-increasing pressure on health and social systems across the EU. Furthermore, the conference sees the presentation of a number of innovative solutions developed for the implementation of care in RMDs, demonstrating the leading role in making use of opportunities offered by new technologies.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/whats-it-worth-musculoskeletal-disease-research-januar-2018.pdf>

MEP Lieve Wierinck, in her opening statement to the conference, comments: “As Members of Parliament and policy-makers will be deciding on Horizon Europe, it is crucial to keep the ambition of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO Europe Action Plan for Non-Communicable Diseases at the forefront of our thinking. Health research and innovation should target citizens’ needs and expectations by addressing the most burdensome chronic conditions through additional research funding and prioritisation. This is fundamental to strengthen the link between citizens and the European Union, at a time where this link seems to be weakening”.

The EULAR Conference provides a platform for the development of policy recommendations with key stakeholders based on experience from the grass-roots level, with direct involvement from policy-makers. In 2018, the conference hosts over 140 participants, including the European Commission, European Parliament, other high-level policy-makers, stakeholders, as well as economists, scientists, health professionals and people living with RMDs. Building on the theme of collaboration, the conference also hosts dedicated workshops focusing on key areas:

- Can citizens have a leading role in health care innovation?
- Organisational and human challenges in the introduction of digital solutions in health care services
- Use of big data in health care and research
- How to foster innovation through Horizon Europe?

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## **Background**

Launched in 2010, the EULAR Conference in Brussels is held every October and coincides each year with the globally celebrated World Arthritis Day. An awareness day initiative, World Arthritis Day represents the opportunity for people around the world to share experiences and information regarding life with a chronic, rheumatic and musculoskeletal disease with the world at large.

RMDs are a wide group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but also the muscles, as well as other tissues and internal organs. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting children and adults. Causes include the immune system, inflammation, infections or gradual deterioration of joints, muscle and bones. Many RMDs are long-term and worsen with time, typically painful and impede



fighting rheumatic & musculoskeletal  
diseases together

function. In severe cases, RMDs can result in significant disability with major impact on 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. To find out more about the activities of EULAR, visit: [www.eular.org](http://www.eular.org).

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### **Notes to Editors**

Read the EULAR Position Paper on Horizon Europe here:

[www.eular.org/public\\_affairs\\_position\\_papers.cfm](http://www.eular.org/public_affairs_position_papers.cfm)

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