



## **Patients with asthma suffer unnecessarily in Europe**

- **Asthma is a serious threat to public health**
- **Massive variations between countries and practices**
- **Increased cross-border exchange of best practice offers a long-term solution**

The financial burden of asthma in the EU amounts to nearly Euro 17.7bn. Every week, one in four Europeans with asthma suffers from attacks so severe they cannot even call out for help. In light of this common challenge, it is vital for EU Member States to work together to improve this dire situation. To this end, an expert panel on asthma at the European Health Forum Gastein, the EU's leading conference on health politics, discussed the way forward. The panelists emphasised the following three points:

- A patient-centered approach is needed, enabling guided self-management in asthma
- Better training and awareness of treating healthcare professionals (e.g. GP, nurse, specialist) is required
- Member States need to learn from best practices in asthma care

The panel discussed the remarkable success of the innovative Finnish public health programme on asthma. Erkka Valovirta, from the Finnish Steering Committee, outlined how this programme dramatically improved patient outcomes whilst also significantly reducing healthcare costs of asthma. "We need concerted efforts to emulate some of the success achieved in Finland across the whole of Europe," said Prof. David Price, Chair of Research at the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG). Susanna Palkonen from the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) added, "The Finnish example has demonstrated what can be achieved at national level. The EU can make a difference by ensuring that other Member States adapt best practice solutions to their own healthcare systems."

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