FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH AT GLANCE 2016: UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE FAR FROM A REALITY IN THE EU**

**BRUSSELS, 23 November 2016 – The latest report from the Commission and OECD shows alarming figures on health coverage in the EU, with a substantial patient population not regularly covered for health care costs. Time for a change and for actions.**

According to the ‘[Health at a Glance](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3749_en.htm)’ report prepared by the European Commission and the OECD, an average of 15% of health spending is paid directly out-of-pocket by patients with large disparities between countries. This correlates with feedback received from our members, who reported that healthcare, when available, can be unaffordable and cause financial hardship. Patients are faced with opacity when it comes to pricing and reimbursement decision and are not involved in decision making, which leads to discrepancies between what they need and what is reimbursed.

As stated in our recent [position paper](http://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/access/epf_position_defining_and_measuring_access_010316.pdf) on the definition of access from the patient’s perspective, we call on the EU and Member States to work together to achieve truly affordable health and social care services. This will require good governance, accountable, and timely and transparent systems of decision making for pricing and reimbursement, where patients are meaningfully involved.

“*To make the right to health a reality in the EU, healthcare needs to be affordable for all, not only these patients who can pay*”, highlighted Nicola Bedlington, EPF Secretary General.

We welcome the statement by the Commission and OECD that ‘*Member States policies should focus on reducing financial barriers to healthcare, strengthening access to primary care, and reducing excessive waiting times*’. This comes perfectly in line with the field of actions identified by our coming campaign on Access and Universal Health Coverage for All. Starting in January 2017, this campaign will help pinpointing the avenues towards universal health coverage by 2030, as stated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Bringing together experts and patients, the campaign will give the opportunity to debate this crucial topic for all patients in the EU and ask Member States to act on their commitment to fulfil this essential objective.

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The **European Patients’ Forum (EPF)** was founded in 2003 to ensure that the patients’ community drives policies and programmes that affect patients’ lives to bring changes empowering them to be equal citizens in the EU.

EPF currently represents 67 members, which are national coalitions of patients organisations and disease-specific patient organisations working at European level, and. EPF reflects the voice of an estimated 150 million patients affected by various chronic diseases throughout Europe.

EPF’s vision for the future is that all patients with chronic and/or lifelong conditions in the EU have access to high quality, patient-centred equitable health and social care.

The EPF strategic goals focus on areas such as health literacy, healthcare design and delivery, patient involvement, patient empowerment, sustainable patients’ organisations and non-discrimination.

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