

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING YOUNG PATIENTS RIGHTS IN THE EU

Brussels, Belgium (April, 18) - In recognition of the 4th European Patients' Right Day, the European Patients' Forum (EPF), an umbrella patient organisation advocacy group reiterates our commitment today to patient-centred EU health policy decision-making. We call for strong engagement by European Institutions and national governments to support this initiative and for the empowerment of patients throughout the European Union.

The European Charter of Patients' Rights was developed in 2002 by Active Citizen Network (ACN) in collaboration with 12 citizen organisations across the EU. ACN says the charter applies to all individuals, recognising that differences in 'age, gender, social economic status and religion' influence healthcare needs.

This year, EPF would like to place particular emphasis on **young patients**, building on the work of our membership to date with young patient groups in different parts of Europe. There are major differences in the way young patients perceive their healthcare environments. In the words of one young patient leader "Being a young patient impacts almost every aspect of life and generally reveals a society far from being equitable and accessible".

EPF President Anders Olauson is a pioneer for young patients' rights. He is the founder and director of the Agrenska Centre, a centre for empowering children, and teenagers with rare diseases and disabilities. Anders Olauson stated that "Young patients more than ever today need our support in becoming involved in health policy-making as their perspective is often ignored or not taken seriously".

This year, the EPF Autumn Advocacy Regional Seminar 2010 will take place in Budapest and will focus on empowering patient organisations and young patients in EU Member States who are diagnosed with a chronic disease. The seminar will explore how young patients perceive EU level policy making, and their unique contribution in influencing policies that affect their lives and ultimately to engage them in shaping the future of healthcare. It will also look at social media as an advocacy tool for young patients.

EPF continues our commitment of putting patients at the centre of health policy. The EPF Manifesto "150 million reasons to act", campaign appealed to Members of European Parliament, national representatives in EU Member States and the new Commission to take action on vital new measures on the quality of healthcare delivered throughout the EU.

In December 2009, at a landmark event under the Swedish Presidency, EPF called for enhanced political commitment on patient involvement in EU health related projects through the Value+ project. This sets the scene for enhanced involvement by young patients, that will also be promoted under the forthcoming Hungarian Presidency in 2011.

For further information or photos, visit EPF's website at www.eu-patient.eu. EPF is a not-for-profit, independent organisation and umbrella representative body for patients' organisations throughout Europe. We advocate for patient-centred equitable healthcare.