



Societal Impact of Pain 2017 Recommendations

8-9 June 2017 - Under the motto 'Structured Cooperation of Health Care Systems', over 300 European health care stakeholders from more than 20 countries met in Malta to discuss the "Societal Impact of Pain" (SIP 2017).

SIP 2017 held working groups gathering together policy makers, members of the European Parliament, pain specialists, scientific researchers, patients' associations, advocacy and civic society and other stakeholders to discuss four key issues:

1. Pain as a quality indicator for health systems
2. Building platforms to address the societal Impact of pain
3. Impact of pain on labour and employment
4. Challenges, models and lighthouses in pain policy

Under the auspices of the 2017 Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, the scientific framework of the European Pain Federation EFIC (EFIC[®]) and guided by SIP 2017 partners Pain Alliance Europe (PAE) and Active Citizenship Network (ACN), the faculty of each of the working groups produced specific policy recommendations addressing the societal impact of pain.

Based on these recommendations, the organizing partners of the SIP platform formulated the following key recommendations directed at the institutions of the European Union and national governments:

1. Establish an EU platform on the societal impact of pain

The European Commission should follow up on commitments made by national governments at the informal Council of EU Health Ministers in Milan, 22 September 2014, to establish an EU platform on pain, facilitating comparison and benchmarking of best practices between member states.

2. Instruments to assess the societal impact of pain.

National health authorities should define, establish or use instruments and indicators to measure the societal impact of pain. This should be done through the creation of national data registries and a push for this data to be shared at a European level. To do this, national governments and health authorities should establish quality indicators to set criteria for granting access to cross-border healthcare and ensuring that electronic health records take note of pain.

The scientific framework of the "Societal Impact of Pain" (SIP) platform is under the responsibility of the [European Pain Federation EFIC[®]](#). Cooperation partners for SIP 2017 are [Pain Alliance Europe \(PAE\)](#) and [Active Citizenship Network \(ACN\)](#). The SIP 2017 symposium is co-hosted by the Malta Health Network and the No Pain Foundation. The pharmaceutical company [Grünenthal GmbH](#) is responsible for funding and non-financial support (e.g. logistical support). The scientific aims of the SIP symposia have been endorsed by a large number of international and national pain advocacy groups, scientific organisations and authorities. SIP 2017 is made possible with the financial support of the Ministry for Finance in Malta.



3. Initiate policies addressing the impact of pain on employment

The European Commission and national governments should work together to promote policies that reflect the link between pain care and employment. This should be recognised at both EU and national levels, through a push for greater interconnection between ministries and services dealing with health, employment, research, and social protection policies and systems. Better understanding of these interconnections would allow for greater efficiencies in pain management, helping patients access the treatment they need to continue being active in the work place.

National plans should also encourage enforcement of existing national legislation requiring reasonable, flexible workplace adjustments by employers that can help people with chronic pain stay in work or reintegrate into the workforce.

4. Prioritise pain within education for health care professionals, patients and the general public

National governments and health authorities should initiate patient education programmes and information campaigns in order to create public awareness of the short and long-term consequences of inadequate access to pain treatment for pain symptoms. The aim of these programmes should be to reduce stigma and increase self-management of pain.

National governments should also promote wider access to pain education among the healthcare profession, including all those who see and treat pain.

5. Increase investment in research on the Societal Impact of Pain

The European Commission and national governments should increase investment in research (basic science, clinical, epidemiological) on the societal impact of pain as a priority in future EU framework programmes and make funds available via employment and health policy research programmes.

The OECD and European Commission should also, in their upcoming edition of Health at a Glance: Europe 2018, present pain as a key indicator of health and health systems analysing the links between population health and labour market outcomes.

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