



## EUROPEAN LUNG HEALTH GROUP

### BACKGROUND

*Provide the rationale and background for your proposed action including challenges and enablers. (max 200 words)*

The [European Lung Health Group \(ELHG\)](#), a group of nine European level non-profit organisations in the respiratory community representing patients and healthcare professionals, gathering 179 member associations across 34 European countries, launched the [#KeepBreathing campaign](#), an advocacy effort to reduce fragmentation of knowledge and policies around lung health at European level.

Following the EU NCD Initiative's focus on chronic conditions, including respiratory diseases among others, combined with the effort to improve [air quality](#) in Europe and the opportunity to eradicate smoking through tobacco control legislation, for the ELHG the time is now for a lung health policy that helps Europe to Keep Breathing.

With the EU's mandate to protect public health and to complement national policies, the ELHG [proposes concrete actions](#) that the European Commission could take in the short and long-term to support the respiratory community and improve lung health in Europe.

### CONCRETE ACTION

▪ **Idea:**

- *What are the objectives and the scope of the action? (max 50 words)*

The Keep Breathing initiative aims at outlining how improving lung health and chronic respiratory diseases at European level, one of the pillars of the EU NCD Initiative, can lead to healthier, stronger, more resilient societies, while providing short-term and long-term proposals on how the EU can transform lung health, based on three pillars of action: prevention, healthcare, and research & innovation.

*How will this action support the prevention of non-communicable diseases in the EU?*

▪ EU added value and impact:

- *What is the EU added value and impact of the action? (max 200 words)*

People in Europe are exposed to a multitude of external factors that impact lung health across their lifetime; the air Europeans breathe interacts with the airways and may result in disease years down the line. Lung health, particularly in childhood, is an important factor in the current health of a child, and in predicting its future adult health. Therefore, taking coordinated action for lung health is crucial in improving the overall wellbeing of the population in the EU. Having healthy lungs means we can breathe, work, and play – and be better prepared for future health crises, including the impact of climate change.

The total societal cost of poor lung health in Europe is 611 billion EUR. 1 in 8 deaths in the EU are due to respiratory diseases, while most people who die from infectious respiratory diseases face complications based on chronic diseases such as lung diseases. Improving lung health is one of the most effective ways of alleviating the strain on EU health systems, improving quality of life, and stimulating the EU economy. By acting on the three pillars of action (prevention, care, research & innovation), EU policymakers can support EU citizens to keep breathing and improve lung health.

## CHALLENGES AND ENABLERS

- *Which issues will your action address on health promotion and prevention of non-communicable diseases in particular related to health determinants, or socio-economic, environmental, commercial determinants of health? (max 150 words)*

With this initiative, it is aimed that chronic respiratory diseases, one of the five strands under the EU NCD Initiative, are being addressed in a targeted and holistic manner, looking at lung health as a whole, rather than in a fragmented disease-specific way. Through #KeepBreathing, the ELHG puts forward suggestions of concrete short and long-term actions which would alleviate the pressure on healthcare systems, stimulating European economies, improving our overall wellbeing, and better preparing Europe for respiratory infections. Actions focus on nine main policy areas where lung health policy is being decided at the EU level, which fall under the socio-economic, environmental, and commercial determinants of health, looking at health promotion, disease prevention, improved care, [digitalisation](#), and innovation of respiratory diseases, with a One Health approach.

*How will it target specific challenges, and are there any enablers that can take your action forward?*

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- *Provide your views on how your organisation can be involved and help in taking this idea forward. (max 200 words)*

The organisations represented in the European Lung Health Group (ELHG) cover a wide clinical spectrum: from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (respiratory allergies and asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), lung cancer and cystic fibrosis), to common infectious diseases (tuberculosis, pneumonia, and severe acute respiratory syndrome), and rare and ultra respiratory diseases (alpha-1, pulmonary fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension). As such, the ELHG, a partnership between healthcare professionals and patients, has an in-depth knowledge, expertise and well-established civil society networks that could contribute to alleviating the burden of respiratory diseases as a whole, and that could effectively address the health promotion and prevention of such diseases at the European level. With the unique role of patients' organisations, combined with the scientific expertise of healthcare professionals, the ELHG stands ready to collaborate, provide insights and expert input on the proposed actions, both short and long-term, as well as disseminate to the national level organisations for the purpose of awareness-raising, behavioural change and bring forward a holistic view to lung health.

*What can  
your  
organisation  
do to put  
this idea in  
place?*