

**Annual European Congress of Rheumatology
(EULAR 2018)**

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 13-16 June 2018

**ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY:
THE EULAR CAMPAIGN 'DON'T DELAY, CONNECT TODAY'**

EULAR Campaign grows across Europe in 2018 with participation of over twenty countries

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 14 June 2018: The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) today celebrated one year since the launch of its campaign, 'Don't Delay, Connect Today', which was launched in June 2017 in Madrid, Spain. Now active in over twenty countries in Europe, and with more countries set to launch the campaign in the second half of the year, 'Don't Delay, Connect Today' is gaining impact across all audiences, including at the political level in Europe.

Since its European launch at the 2017 EULAR Congress in Madrid, Spain, and national pre-launches in Lisbon, Portugal and Zagreb, Croatia, the EULAR Campaign has entered the halls of parliament as well as other national legislative bodies in several countries. In February 2018, Belgium launched its national campaign at the federal parliament in Brussels, while in the month of April in the same year, politicians and members of parliament in Romania attended a dedicated, high-level event for the campaign launch in the country's capital, Bucharest.

EULAR President, Prof. Johannes W. Bijlsma comments, "The specific needs, including political policy changes that will achieve the goals of the campaign are not the same in every country, but we are seeing collaboration of the pillars within these countries to push the campaign forward."

EULAR is structured into three pillars: People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe (PARE), health professionals in rheumatology (HPR), and scientific societies. The three pillars are all represented in 'Don't Delay, Connect Today', bringing them together to speak with one voice to society at large. Speaking at a press conference at the EULAR Congress 2018 in Amsterdam, Dieter Wiek, EULAR Vice President representing PARE said, "We introduced and promoted the campaign one year ago with the aim to drive awareness across all audiences. While this is taking shape, an unexpected benefit has also presented itself: The campaign has seen a joining of forces at the national level in rheumatology; we have found the EULAR pillars speaking in one voice, and this has been a powerful development for supporting the key messages."

Further campaign launches have taken place across Europe during the first half of this year: In May, Cyprus marked the start of the campaign with a series of events including meetings with policy-makers, while a sponsored cycle through the Hebridean Way in Scotland marked the campaign's first steps on British soil. Many other countries have launched dedicated

activities. Germany once again brought to life its 'Rheuma truck', a large vehicle that is set to tour three of the country's regions to raise awareness, while Finland, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia have all brought the campaign to life through activities both on and off line.

In order to address all audiences, events and activities have been run in national languages, with an editorial translation of 'Don't Delay, Connect Today' tailored to fit cultural and linguistic needs. This has also helped to capture the attention of national media: "Based on stories in the media there is significant impact – and that in twenty one countries to date!" commented Dieter Wiek. Reaching across borders through the use of social media has again seen the campaign translated into local languages while also employing the use of English, especially of the campaign hashtag #ConnectToday. A dedicated section of the EULAR Village at the EULAR Congress in Amsterdam has information on the campaign available.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

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About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can affect any organ of the body. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting both children and adults. They are usually caused by problems of the immune system, inflammation, infections or gradual deterioration of joints, muscle and bones. Many of these diseases are long term and worsen over time. They are typically painful and limit function. In severe cases, RMDs can result in significant disability, having a major impact on both quality of life and life expectancy.¹

About 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!'

'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' is a EULAR initiative that unites the voices of its three pillars, patient (PARE) organisations, scientific member societies and health professional associations - as well as its international network - with the goal of highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment. In the European Union alone, over 120 million people are currently living with a rheumatic disease (RMD), with many cases undetected.² The 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' campaign aims to highlight that early diagnosis of RMDs and access to treatment can prevent further damage, and also reduce the burden on individual life and society as a whole.

About EULAR

The European League against Rheumatism (EULAR) is the European umbrella organisation representing scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people

with RMDs. EULAR aims to reduce the burden of RMDs on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of RMDs. To this end, EULAR fosters excellence in education and research in the field of rheumatology. It promotes the translation of research advances into daily care and fights for the recognition of the needs of people with RMDs by the EU institutions through advocacy action.

To find out more about the activities of EULAR, visit: www.eular.org

References

¹ van der Heijde D, *et al.* Common language description of the term rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) for use in communication with the lay public, healthcare providers and other stakeholders endorsed by the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) and the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. 2018;doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2017-212565. [Epub ahead of print].

² EULAR. 10 things you should know about rheumatic diseases fact sheet. Available at: <https://www.eular.org/myUploadData/files/10%20things%20on%20RD.pdf> [Last accessed April 2018].