

DECLARATION

30th JUNE 2011

Signatories of the present Declaration participated in the Hungarian EU Presidency Conference, entitled „Burden of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases: Challenges in Work Capacity and Prevention of Disability”, organized in Budapest on 20-21 April 2011, and proclaim their agreement in the following:

- One in six people in the European Union (EU), whose population now is around 500 million, has a disability. Disability ranges from mild to severe making around 80 million people, who are often prevented from taking part fully in society and the economy. For people with disabilities the rate of poverty is 70% higher than the average, partly due to limited access to employment.
- One of the main objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy is to increase the rate of employment; specifically the employment rate of people with age 20-64 should achieve 75%. Europe should maximize utilization of its workforce potential. In order to reach this objective it is indispensable to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities, which attains an average of 50% in the EU.
- Improvement of conditions of citizens living with disabilities in the European Union is one of the main objectives of Social Policy in the EU. It is reflected by the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 document, launched by the European Commission on 15 November 2010, which also supports full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Member States and in the institutions of the European Union.
- Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) affect 25% of the population of the European Union and are identified among the main causes leading to disabilities. They impose heavy burden not only on people with disabilities but also on their families, the employers the society and the economy. Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases affect more than 40 million workers out of 226 million. 60% of early retirement is due to RMDs. The total cost of RMDs is estimated to be up to 240 billion Euros a year.
- Europe needs every individual, and also from this aspect it is highly important to enable the possible highest proportion of people with disabilities to be employed, and to be able to work under appropriate health and working conditions. To foster these, both screening and prevention of disabilities and supporting people with changed working capacity and/or disabilities are important tasks in the EU Member States. By doing so we can contribute to a higher quality of life and revitalising or retaining work capacity.
- This approach is reflected by the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020. One of its 8 areas for action is „Health”. According to the strategy the Commission will support

policy developments for equal access to healthcare, including quality health and rehabilitation services designed for people with disabilities. It will pay specific attention to people with disabilities when implementing policies to tackle health inequalities; promote action in the field of health and safety at work to reduce risks of disabilities developing during working life and to improve the reintegration of workers with disabilities; and work to prevent those risks.

- Prevention, screening and early, effective treatment of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases can contribute to a large extent to the prevention of disability and help to maintain and improve work capacity. Regulations on EU and national level, promotion of health at work combined with social assistance as well as spreading flexible working arrangements can play the major role in it.
- Signatories of the present Declaration proclaim their intention of cooperation in prevention of disabilities through prevention, screening and early, effective treatment of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases as well as related flexible working arrangements and social assistance. The first steps to this direction have been taken during the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies and further improvement can be made during the Polish Presidency. Signatories stand for starting the professional and policy elaboration of the above programme in 2011.

Present from Member States of current Trio + 1 Presidencies of the Council of the European Union

Mr. Jaime Alejandro

Director General for the Coordination of Sectoral Policies on Disability, Director of the Spanish Royal Disability Board, Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, **Spain**

Mr. Jean-Marc Delizée

Secretary of State for Social Affairs, in charge of disabled persons, assistant to the Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, in charge of social integration, **Belgium**

Mr. Miklós Soltész

Minister of State for Social, Family and Youth Affairs, Ministry of National Resources, **Hungary**

Ms Ildikó Bernáth

Ministerial Commissioner for Disability Affairs, **Hungary**

Dr. Árpád Gógl

Minister of Health 1998-2000, **Hungary**

Mr. Jaroslaw Duda

Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People, **Poland**

Present from the European Parliament

Dr. m Ksa

Member of European Parliament, Head of Disability Intergroup, Member of Legal Committee, European Union of the Deaf

Dr. Jnos der

Member of European Parliament

Present from professional organizations:

Prof. Dr. Paul Emery

President, European League Against Rheumatism

Prof. Dr. Josef Smolen

Former president, European League Against Rheumatism

Prof. Dr. Gyula Por

President, Hungarian Association of Rheumatologists

Prof. Dr. Ingemar Petersson

Fit for Work Europe Coalition