

From Burden to Prevention: Reframing Chronic Pain in EU Health Policy

Thursday 16th October 2025 – 11h30-13h30

European Parliament (A3E-2)

Concept Note

Join us for an in-depth discussion on the **prevention of chronic pain** and its potential to reshape European health systems. This event, organised by the Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) platform, will convene policymakers, researchers, clinicians, and patient advocates to explore how the EU can scale up preventive action on one of Europe's most prevalent and costly health conditions.

Chronic pain—defined as pain lasting more than three months—is the most common health condition in Europe and a major contributor to disability worldwide. It includes musculoskeletal pain, neuropathic pain, cancer-related pain, postsurgical pain, and migraine, affecting people at all life stages.

Its impact goes far beyond physical symptoms: chronic pain severely reduces quality of life, limits participation in work and society, and increases the risk of mental ill health, social isolation, and premature death. Economically, it costs Europe an estimated **€12 billion annually**—equivalent to 4% of GDP—mainly due to healthcare use, lost productivity, and long-term absence from work.

Despite its scale, chronic pain is still under-recognised in policy, underfunded in research, and poorly addressed in care pathways. Most treatments offer limited, short-term relief and do not prevent chronicity or disability. **Prevention is therefore not just beneficial, but essential.**

Preventive action can reduce the onset and severity of chronic pain, support health system sustainability, and improve equity. Chronic pain affects disadvantaged groups more severely—especially women, people with disabilities, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Addressing it through prevention is a **public health imperative and a social and economic necessity for Europe.**

This event will present SIP's **Position Statement on Preventive Healthcare for Chronic Pain**, highlight priority areas for EU action, and explore how the current and the next EU mandate can embed prevention into health, employment, and research strategies.

- **In person:** European Parliament – Room A3E-2
- **50-100 attendees:**
 - SIP Community/SIP Stakeholders
 - EU stakeholders with an interest in access to treatment and prevention
 - EU policymakers with an interest in health
 - Pain experts from across Europe
 - WHO
- **Desired outcomes:**
 - Explain how chronic pain fits into broader NCDs policies

- Highlight policy interventions to alleviate chronic pain prevalence and save money for European healthcare systems
- Build partnerships to improve the wider pain policy environment

SIP Calls Upon EU and National Policymakers to:

1. **Implement public health campaigns** to improve pain-related health literacy among professionals, patients, and the public.
2. **Promote structured exercise and education programmes** in clinical and workplace settings to reduce the risk and recurrence of chronic pain.
3. **Adopt evidence-based standards** for acute and chronic pain management to improve early interventions and reduce low-value care.
4. **Ensure early access to biopsychosocial rehabilitation** for people at risk of chronic pain, especially those with depression, low recovery expectations, or socio-economic disadvantage.
5. **Support inclusive employment policies and workplace adaptations** that promote return-to-work and job retention.
6. **Foster cross-sector collaboration** between health, mental health, education, and social protection systems.
7. **Strengthen primary care systems** to deliver timely diagnosis, coordination, and follow-up.
8. **Fund prevention-focused research**, especially on mechanisms, interventions, implementation, and patient-driven solutions.

Let us work together **towards improved prevention**, protecting the health and productivity of millions, and ensuring Europe is ready for the demographic and economic challenges ahead.

Agenda

Start	End	Title	Speakers
11:30	11:45	Opening remarks from Members of the European Parliament	MEP Motreanu -EPP MEP Pietikäinen – EPP MEP Andriukaitis – S&D
11:45	11:55	Welcome from the Societal Impact of Pain (SIP)	Patrice Forget <i>European Pain Federation EFIC – SIP Chair</i> Liisa Jutila <i>Pain Alliance Europe PAE – SIP Co-Chair</i>
11:55	12:02	SIP position on prevention and pain as an NCD Presentation of the SIP Position Paper on Preventive Healthcare	Patrice Forget <i>European Pain Federation EFIC – SIP Chair</i>
12:02	12:14	Prevention: A new theme of research and practice	Ulrike Kaiser <i>Klinik für Anästhesiologie und Intensivmedizin – Universitätsklinikum</i>
12:14	12:26	How rehabilitation, access to care, and cross-sector collaboration can help address and prevent chronic pain as part of broader non-communicable disease (NCD) strategies. <i>(Title TBC)</i>	Amy Jo Collins <i>World Health Organisation</i> <i>World Rehabilitation Alliance</i>
12:26	12:38	Exploring the role of vaccination in chronic pain prevention	Anna Van Renen <i>International Longevity Centre UK</i>
12:38	12:50	Prevention Research: What Do We Still Need to Know? <i>Predictive markers and biopsychosocial risk factors</i> <i>Evaluating interventions in real-world contexts</i> <i>Research addressing equity and gender</i>	Mary O’Keeffe <i>University College Dublin</i> <i>European Pain Federation EFIC</i>
12:50	12:57	Q&A	All attendees
12:57	13:07	Closing Remarks by Members of the European Parliament	MEP Sokol -EPP
13:07	13:20	Patient Testimony	Nadia Malliou <i>Pain Alliance Europe</i>
13:20	13:30	Closing Reflections and Final Words	Joanne O’Brien Kelly <i>European Pain Federation EFIC</i>