***The Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) Platform***

***Feedback to the European Commission Cardiovascular Diseases Plan***

*The Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) Platform welcomes the European Commission’s initiative on a Cardiovascular Health Plan as a step toward strengthening action on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). However, we urge the Commission to adopt a more comprehensive approach by recognising that chronic pain is not only a major NCD burden in its own right,****but also a significant determinant of cardiovascular outcomes****. Integrating pain prevention and management within cardiovascular policy is essential if Europe is to achieve its NCD policy framework objectives.*

*Chronic pain is the****most common health condition in Europe****, affecting more than 150 million people and representing a leading cause of long-term disability. Its economic burden is estimated at****3–4% of European GDP****, driven by healthcare costs, productivity losses, and social exclusion. Beyond its social and economic costs, evidence suggests that chronic pain directly increases cardiovascular risk. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis found that people with chronic musculoskeletal pain are nearly twice as likely to report having cardiovascular disease compared with those without chronic pain. Evidence also shows that osteoarthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, highlighting the urgent need for integrated prevention and early intervention. Furthermore, there is a dose–response relationship: greater pain intensity is associated with worse cardiovascular outcomes, including elevated mortality, cardiac disease, and stroke. This means that neglecting pain prevention and management in the context of cardiovascular health undermines the effectiveness of potential strategies. Additionally, chronic pain shares many of the same****modifiable risk factors****as cardiovascular disease — including sedentary behaviour, poor sleep, psychological distress, and low socioeconomic status. Further,* pain is a frequent accompanying symptom, or consequence, of (cardio)vascular conditions (and treatment). Recent research suggests that current pain management, in particular opioids, may be associated with an increased risk of CVD, particularly cerebrovascular accidents and ischaemic heart disease. Given the global opioid and CVD burden, targeted interventions and integrated care approaches are needed.

*As outlined in the 2025 SIP Position Paper on Preventive Healthcare for Chronic Pain, and supported by recent findings in The Lancet Regional Health – Europe, pain prevention is a****strategic priority for European public health****and must be both equity-driven and embedded across the NCD continuum. Coordinated prevention efforts can reduce future health system costs and improve both pain-related and cardiovascular outcomes. Interventions such as structured physical activity, early access to care, and biopsychosocial support have proven effective in mitigating chronic pain and improving population health resilience.*

*Despite these links,****chronic pain remains largely absent from EU NCD strategies****, including those targeting cardiovascular disease. This upcoming Cardiovascular Health Plan is a crucial opportunity to close that gap. We urge the Commission to:*

* *Recognise chronic pain as a****relevant component of the NCD and cardiovascular burden****in Europe;*
* *Invest in****research on the intersections between chronic pain and cardiovascular health****, including shared risk factors and co-management strategies;* *in particular, support longitudinal studies to better understand the mechanisms linking chronic pain (eg. Back pain) and cardiovascular disease;*
* *Encourage Member States to develop****integrated prevention programmes****that include pain and CVD in joint risk reduction efforts;*
* *Support the inclusion of****pain prevention and management in primary care****and community health frameworks.*

*Chronic pain is not only a major public health concern on its own — it also directly impacts the success of Europe’s cardiovascular and NCD policy objectives. Recognising and addressing this interconnection will be essential to ensuring a****people-centred, preventive, and resilient health system****for the future.*

*We look forward to working with the Commission and stakeholders across the health community to advance this shared agenda.*

***Sources****:*

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***About SIP***

*The 'Societal Impact of Pain' (SIP) platform is a multi-stakeholder partnership led by the European Pain Federation EFIC and Pain Alliance Europe (PAE), which aims to raise awareness of pain and change pain policies. The platform provides opportunities for discussion for health care professionals, pain advocacy groups, politicians, healthcare insurance providers, representatives of health authorities, regulators, and budget holders. The scientific framework of the SIP platform is under the responsibility of EFIC and the strategic direction of the project is defined by both partners. The pharmaceutical companies Grünenthal GmbH and GSK are the main sponsors of the Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) platform.*

*For further information, please contact:*

*Ángela Cano Palomares, Project Manager, Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) Europe, at European Pain Federation EFIC – angela.palomares@efic.org*

*Pain Alliance Europe (PAE) -* [*info@pae-eu.eu*](mailto:info@pae-eu.eu)

*EFIC Transparency Register Number: 35010244568-04*