

## PRESS RELEASE

### Launch of the MEP Friends of the Liver Interest group to tackle a silent epidemic

*Brussels 27<sup>th</sup> May* - The MEP Friends of the Liver Interest Group (1) was launched today at the European Parliament in Brussels in an event hosted by the Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Dr Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (EPP, RO), calls on the European Parliament to use its significant powers raise awareness about liver disease and advocate for EU policies to ensure that all patients have access to the best treatments and medicines.

Previously chaired by Stephen Hughes from the UK Labour Party, the group was formed in February 2013 and has been reformed after the election of the new Parliament in 2014. The new co-chairs are Romanian EPP member, Dr Cristian-Silviu Buşoi and Dr Biljana Borzan, an S&D group member from Croatia. Subsequent meetings will look at the role of food and obesity in liver disease and its links with diabetes and heart disease and the need for an EU strategy on viral hepatitis (HCV) and access to medicines for HCV.

Liver disease is a neglected and growing public health problem. Besides well-known diseases such as liver cirrhosis, it also includes Hepatitis B (HBV) & Hepatitis C (HCV), liver cancer and fatty liver disease. (2) *"As a doctor and policy maker, who has seen the extent of liver disease across the EU, I delighted to be chairing this important and needed Friends of the Liver group,"* said Mr. Buşoi.

Preventing these deaths would have enormous benefits for Europe's citizens as well as saving the EU and Member States' economies billions of Euros in health and social care costs. Not to mention the benefits from development of diagnostics and safer new drugs that could treat and save patients and be marketed around the world. *"Liver disease is a huge problem in the EU and I am looking forward to working with the Friends of the Liver group to help fix that,"* said Ms Borzan, Co-Chair of the group.



The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) (3) will be the Secretariat of the newly formed group. In December 2014, EASL launched the 'Research Roadmap for Liver Disease (HEPAMAP) - Case study for chronic diseases & research' (4). The HEPAMAP stresses the need for further research on liver disease and calls on policy makers to step up their efforts to tackle the disease and its links with lifestyle and other disease, like cardiovascular conditions and cancer. *"Liver disease is a silent epidemic affecting millions of patients that needs more attention at EU level. EASL looks forward to working with the Friends of the Liver group to change this,"* concluded Mr Laurent CASTERA, EASL Secretary-General.

- (1) [The MEP Friends of the Liver Interest group](#) in the European Parliament is a group of MEPs with an interest in liver disease and its underlying causes. The aim of the group is to raise awareness amongst their colleagues and the European Commission of liver disease and to identify and advocate for European Union policies that can help prevent it and improve treatment.
- (2) In the European region there are an estimated 15 million people suffering from HBV and almost 8 million EU citizens are infected with HCV. There are 47,000 deaths in the EU each year from liver cancer and 170,000 deaths from liver cirrhosis. We estimate that over 100 million EU residents suffer from fatty liver disease due to obesity and overweight.
- (3) [The European Association for the Study of the Liver \(EASL\)](#) is a membership organisation for hepatology health professionals based in Geneva (Switzerland). EASL currently has just over 4,000 members from over 100 countries. The EASL annual congress now attracts over 10,000 participants and is the biggest medical liver congress in the world. EASL will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2015.
- (4) [HEPAMAP: Prospects for Liver Disease Research in the EU](#)

### **Contact**

**Fiona Godfrey**, Director of European Public Affairs at European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) on +35 269 149 0948. Twitter: [@fjgodfrey](#)

Future meetings will take place on a regular basis. Follow the group on Twitter to stay updated [@MEPLiverGroup](#) [#LiverFriends](#)

