

Embargoed until 12 April 2012

## **The EPDA launches awareness-raising initiative and MEP Support Network in the European Parliament as part of World Parkinson's Disease Day celebrations**

London, 12 April 2012 – The European Parkinson's Disease Association's (EPDA) has launched the Pledge for Parkinson's in the European Parliament – it's latest initiative that aims to raise unprecedented awareness about Parkinson's disease with EU policymakers and the general public.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from across the political spectrum signed up to Pledge on World Parkinson's Disease Day (11 April) and the EPDA is now urging all people from across Europe and beyond to sign up to the four-point 'call to action', which outlines how MEPs and other policymakers can work towards improving conditions for people with Parkinson's. Specifically, the Pledge states:

*There are more than 1.2 million people living with Parkinson's in Europe today and this number is forecast to double by 2030. The annual European cost of the disease is estimated at €13.9 billion, and as our population continues to live longer, this cost will continue to rise dramatically – especially in the later stages of the disease where the impact is greatest on people with Parkinson's, their families and carers, and society as a whole.*

*We support the EPDA in its efforts to work with European policymakers towards:*

- maintaining and increasing funding for Parkinson's disease research under the EU Horizon 2020 framework programme*
- establishing best practice in the management of Parkinson's disease across Europe*
- expanding the influence of national patient organisations to help people with Parkinson's disease become more involved in their own treatment*
- ensuring that neurodegenerative diseases become an EU healthcare policy priority.*

By signing the Pledge for Parkinson's, the 44 MEPs become part of the Parkinson's Disease MEP Support Network, which is committed to raising awareness of Parkinson's disease and ensuring it becomes an EU healthcare priority.

“The statistics from the Pledge are disturbing enough – but there are plenty more where they came from,” said Linda McAvan MEP, one of the Pledge for Parkinson's chief supporters. “The annual cost of brain disorders in Europe in 2010 was €798 billion yet EC funding for brain disorders during the first three calls of FP7 only stretched to €381 million – less than 1% of that cost, according to recent figures from the European Brain Council. Current funding simply does not reflect the impact brain disease has on society.

“It is because of the severity of Parkinson’s disease and its impact on the individual, their family and society that both of the EPDA’s 11 April initiatives deserve the backing from European policymakers. I urge my colleagues who haven’t done so – and the wider European public – to sign the Pledge and join this campaign for change.”

EPDA president Knut-Johan Onarheim added: “The Pledge is at the beginning of a long-term journey and we request everyone to sign it and support it. We hope that in the months and years to come, hundreds of thousands of people – ranging from the general public to the president of the European Commission – will have read it, thought about it, agreed with it and signed it. If that happens then the profile of Parkinson’s will have increased dramatically and this will go some way towards fulfilling our mission, which is so important: to enable people living with the disease to be treated effectively and equally throughout Europe.”

If you would like to sign the Pledge for Parkinson’s, visit [www.epda.eu.com/pledge](http://www.epda.eu.com/pledge)

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Parkinson’s disease**

- Parkinson’s disease is a progressive, chronic and complex neurodegenerative disease that has no cure.
- It affects all aspects of daily living and is the most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer’s disease.
- The incidence of Parkinson’s is forecast to double by 2030, primarily as a result of the ageing population.
- Treatment and management is available for a number of aspects of the disease but is not yet accessible to all.
- Ongoing research has resulted in significant improvements but more is needed to delay, stop or even reverse the disease.
- Parkinson’s disease is predominantly characterised by problems with body movements – known as motor symptoms. These symptoms include tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia and postural instability.
- The disease is also associated with symptoms that are not directly related to movement – known as non-motor symptoms. These symptoms include sleep disturbances, constipation, the loss of sense of smell, depression, sexual dysfunction, anxiety and lots more.

#### **World Parkinson’s Disease Day**

World Parkinson’s Disease Day is held every year on 11 April – the birth date of the English doctor James Parkinson, from whom the name of the disease is taken – and is the most important day in national Parkinson’s disease organisations’ calendars of all over the world.

#### **The European Parkinson’s Disease Association (EPDA)**

The EPDA is the only European Parkinson’s disease umbrella organisation. A non-political, non-religious and non-profit-making organisation, it represents 45 member organisations and advocates for the rights and needs of more than 1.2 million people with Parkinson’s and their families.

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The EPDA's vision is to enable all people with Parkinson's in Europe to live a full life while supporting the search for a cure. In order to achieve its vision, the EPDA aims to become the leading voice for Parkinson's in Europe – providing innovative leadership, information and resources to national Parkinson's associations, European policymakers, the treatment industry, healthcare professionals and the media. In achieving these aims, the EPDA hopes to raise the profile of Parkinson's and enable people living with the disease to be treated effectively and equally throughout Europe.  
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Other useful EPDA links:

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