

## EMHA Whitepaper - Executive Summary

# Strategic Advocacy Framework to Improve Migraine Care and Support



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## INTRODUCTION

**Migraine is a complex and often debilitating bio-neurological disorder** affecting a significant portion of the global population (Martelletti et al., 2018). **Despite being the second leading cause of years lived with disability globally**, as reported in the 2019 Global Burden of Disease Study, **migraine remains underrecognized and undertreated** (Vos et al., 2020). This lack of attention results in delayed diagnoses, inadequate treatment, and substantial socioeconomic costs (Raffaelli et al., 2023).

**Policymakers have a unique opportunity to implement changes that can significantly improve the lives of people with migraines** while reducing the economic burden associated with inadequate care.

This **white paper** advocates for the inclusion of migraine in the **2025 EU Neurological Health Strategy**, outlined in the 2025 Draft Work Programme of the European Parliament's Health Committee (SANT), stressing the importance of treating it as a serious neurological disorder that demands coordinated action at both **European and national levels**.

Drawing on conclusions from a **2024 Policy Roundtable at the European Headache Congress**, it highlights key priorities to improve migraine care across the EU, including enhancing medical education, streamlining care pathways, implementing workplace interventions, improving access to innovation and policy recognition of migraine as a bio-neurological disease.

The paper also serves as a **tool for national advocacy**, supporting alignment between national and EU strategies. By encouraging collaboration among stakeholders—patient groups, healthcare professionals, and policymakers—it aims to **build a more integrated and equitable approach to migraine care**. As the SANT Committee prepares its hearing, **this document provides timely, evidence-based recommendations to address persistent gaps in migraine treatment and policy**.

### References:

- Martelletti, P., et al. (2018). My Migraine Voice survey. The Journal of Headache and Pain.
- Vos, T., et al. (2020). Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. The Lancet.
- Raffaelli, B., et al. (2023). Health equity, care access and quality in headache – part 2. The Journal of Headache and Pain.

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Advocating on 3 priorities to enhance migraine care pathway.*

Addressing these recommendations will lead to significant improvements in migraine treatment and management, ultimately enhancing the lives of millions while reducing the economic burden associated with inadequate care (Table 1).

#### *01/ Improving Timely Screening and Diagnosis: Transforming Migraine Care*

**Challenges:** Delayed diagnosis, limited education on migraines in medical training programs, and a lack of screening tools in primary care settings contribute to prolonged suffering and unnecessary strain on healthcare systems (Raffaelli et al., 2023).

##### **Policy Recommendations:**

- Expand **migraine-specific education in medical curricula** and integrate it into national treatment guidelines.
- **Strengthening the role of general practitioners** by providing tools to support the appropriate, personalized management and long-term monitoring of migraine patients.
- Implement **community-based screening programs**:
  - Increase **public health programs to train nurses** to recognize migraine and help identify undiagnosed cases.
  - **Leveraging pharmacists** to use validated screening tools, triage protocols, and early intervention practices.
  - Promote **corporate workplace interventions** to provide employees with access to migraine screening and education.
  - Introduce **early interventions in schools and higher education to train teachers and parents** in recognizing early migraine symptoms.

#### *02/ Expanding Coverage and Early Access to Therapeutic Innovation*

**Challenges:** Restrictive policies on migraine treatments, reliance on over-the-counter painkillers leading to medication-overuse headaches, and inadequate data collection hinder advocacy efforts and create barriers to patient access to care (Raffaelli et al., 2023).

##### **Policy Recommendations:**

- Leverage **real-world evidence to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness** of early migraine intervention and improve treatment coverage.
- Pressing need to **establish a streamlined healthcare pathway** to further improve collaborative care and optimize migraine management throughout all levels of care.
- **Accelerating access to innovative migraine care** by reducing excessive bureaucratic hurdles in healthcare approval pathways.

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### *03/ Political Commitment & Recognition of Migraine as a Bio-neurological Disease*

**Challenges:** Migraine is often perceived as a lesser health priority due to its episodic nature and non-fatality. As a result, limited funding, lack of structured policies, and economic burdens remain largely unaddressed (Raffaelli et al., 2023).

#### **Policy Recommendations:**

- Push for **formal recognition of migraine as a bio-neurological disorder** at European and National level to improve funding allocation and healthcare prioritization
- **Raising awareness among policymakers** using personal patient stories and public figures to highlight migraine's real-world impact
- **Advocating for dedicated funding** to secure resources for migraine research, education, and expanded treatment access, revising outdated policies, shifting the conversation from healthcare burden to savings and establishing state-sponsored knowledge centers for migraine

By addressing these challenges, policymakers can implement concrete measures to transform migraine care. Integrating early screening, expanding access to effective treatments, and prioritizing migraine within public health policies will significantly improve patient well-being while reducing the socioeconomic impact of the disease.

### *Conclusions*

This white paper is a **key contribution** to the upcoming **EU Neurological Health Strategy**, emphasizing the need to fully recognize migraine as a serious and widespread neurological disorder. Based on expert input from over 20 European countries, it offers patient-centered, evidence-based recommendations to guide both EU and national policies. The document supports collaboration among patient groups, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to drive systemic change and integrate migraine into EU and national health strategies. As the SANT Committee advances its work, the outlined priorities—such as better diagnosis, establish a streamlined healthcare pathway, access to innovation, commitment on policy recognition, and workplace support—provide a **clear roadmap to reduce the burden of migraine and promote health equity across Europe**.

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**Table 1: Translating Dialogue into Action: Key Challenges and Policy Proposals to Support Policy Reform at Local and EU Levels for Transforming Migraine Care**

#### I. Improving Timely Screening and Diagnosis: Transforming Migraine Care

##### Key Challenges

- **Delayed diagnosis** leads to prolonged suffering and increased burden on healthcare systems.
- **Limited education on migraine in medical training programs** results in inadequate recognition and treatment.
- **A lack of screening tools in primary care** settings results in many undiagnosed patients.

##### Policy Recommendations

- **Enhancing Medical Education:** Expand migraine training in medical curricula, integrate it into national treatment guidelines.
- **Strengthening the role of general practitioners** by providing tools to support the appropriate, personalized management and long-term monitoring of migraine patients.
- **Implementing Community-Based Screening Programs:**
  - **Increase public health programs** to train nurses and leverage pharmacists to use validated screening tools, and early intervention practices.
  - **Corporate Workplace Interventions:** Implement workplace programs to educate employees on migraine and provide access to screening.
  - **Early Interventions in Schools & Higher Education:** Integrate migraine education into school health programs, train teachers and parents to recognize early signs, and support students experiencing migraine.

#### II. Expanding Coverage and Access to Therapeutic Innovation

##### Key Challenges

- Many **health systems impose restrictive policies on migraine treatments**, creating barriers to access.
- The **overuse of over-the-counter painkillers** contributes to medication-overuse headache (MOH) and ineffective management.
- **Inadequate data collection on migraine prevalence and costs** makes advocacy efforts challenging.

##### Policy Recommendations

- **Leveraging Data for Policy Influence:** Utilize **RWE** to demonstrate the **cost-effectiveness of early migraine intervention** and improve treatment coverage.
- **Establishing a streamlined healthcare pathway:** To further improve collaborative care and optimize migraine management throughout all levels of care.
- **Accelerating Access to Treatments:** Update national health policies to allow **direct access** to specialized migraine care and therapies without excessive bureaucratic hurdles.

#### III. Political Commitment & Recognition of Migraine as a Bio-neurological Disease

##### Key Challenges

- Migraine is often **perceived as a lesser health priority** due to its episodic nature and non-fatality.
- The **economic burden of untreated migraine remains largely unaddressed** in healthcare policy discussions.
- **Limited government funding and policy support** hinder research, treatment accessibility, and public awareness.

##### Policy Recommendations

- **Formal Recognition of Migraine as a Neurological Disorder:** Push for policy changes that officially recognize migraine as a bio-neurological disorder at European and National level to improve funding allocation and healthcare prioritization.
- **Raising Awareness Among Policymakers:** Utilize personal testimonies and public figures to highlight migraine's real-world impact.
- **Advocating for Dedicated Funding:** Secure resources for migraine research, education, and expanded treatment access revising outdated policies, reframing migraine care as an economic opportunity, rather than a healthcare burden and establishing state-sponsored knowledge centers for migraine.

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## Strategic Advocacy Framework to Improve Migraine Care and Support

This document has been endorsed by the following associations:



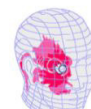
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