

## **Press release: Incontinence costs European society over 40 billion Euros per year**

*Accumulated costs related to continence care are expected to rise to 320 billion Euros by 2030*

**Brussels, 23 September 2023** – New international research on the economic burden of urinary incontinence reveals that the cost of continence care will cost over 40 billion Euros in 2023. These costs include the impact of incontinence on individuals' health, the costs of medical consultations and products such as continence pads, incontinence-related absenteeism at work, nursing home admissions, and the environmental impact of incontinence care. If no action is taken to support continence health, incontinence will become a major health problem in Europe, worsened by an ageing society, resulting in a total accumulated economic burden of 320 billion Euros in 2030.

Around 55-60 million Europeans suffer from continence health problems. This often chronic condition not only affects the quality of life of patients and their loved ones, but also has a significant impact on national health systems, the economy, and the environment. Around 35% of the 40 billion Euros that incontinence cost this year was related to the productivity loss of patients, and another third was related to the use of continence pads. When looking at the costs of waste disposal, the cost of incinerating (burning the pads) was marginally lower than recycling. However, the carbon footprint of recycling is significantly lower.

Professor Philip Van Kerrebroeck, co-chairman of the Policy Office of the European Association of Urology says: "Continence problems are felt across gender, age, and socio-economic backgrounds, and can result in a serious negative impact on individuals' quality of life. Physical, psychosocial and economic consequences for patients and their carers are a barrier to full participation in society. Optimal continence health should be a reality for everyone."

Since the risk of continence problems often correlates with conditions that develop or intensify as people age, it is predicted that these problems will increase, as the European population is ageing at a rapid pace. Health professionals and informal caregivers are making every effort within the existing constraints of different health systems, however, current systems are not yet fully adapted to support continence care. Policies and laws in both EU Member States and non-member European countries tend to neglect continence care despite its prevalence, serious nature, and availability of solutions.

Van Kerrebroeck: "It is time to take action and transform this neglected issue to address the continence health challenge Europe is facing. In our Urge to Act campaign we would like to make policymakers aware that there are many ways to improve continence health, through

increased prevention, better care, access to supportive interventions including treatment, and more inclusive environments. Much more should be done to reduce the direct expenses, the burden on patients, their carers, and on society.”

At the first EU Continence Health Summit that will take place on the 8th November in Brussels, stakeholders will come together to achieve substantial change in policies relating to incontinence across Europe. During this event the EU Continence Health Manifesto will be presented, including 10 topline calls to action to underscore the need for action and provide policymakers with a policy vision that can drive tangible change.

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### **For the editor**

#### **Contact**

Lis Hesston, EAU communications coordinator

E: [press@uroweb.org](mailto:press@uroweb.org)

T: +31 (0)26 389 0680

Sarah Collen, EAU policy coordinator

E: [s.collen@uroweb.org](mailto:s.collen@uroweb.org)

T: +32 (0)474 511 480

#### **About EAU**

The European Association of Urology (EAU) represents the leading authority within Europe on urological practice, research, and education. Over 19,000 medical professionals have joined its ranks and contributed to our mission: To raise the level of urological care throughout Europe and beyond.

<https://uroweb.org/>

#### **About Urge to Act**

“An Urge to Act” is a campaign initiated by the EAU campaign that aims for a substantial transformation in EU-wide policies for incontinence. It will call for policymakers to recognise the burden of continence health problems, improve diagnosis and optimise patient outcomes in Europe through increased prevention, better care and access to supportive interventions, including treatment.

<https://uroweb.org/an-urge-to-act>

In 2023, the total economic burden of Urinary Incontinence in Europe is estimated at nearly €40 billion.



If no action is taken, the total economic burden of UI in Europe is estimated at €318 billion in 2030.

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