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European ME Alliance Statement
WHO Regional Committee Meeting for Europe
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Agenda Item 12: Progress Reports. WHO European Framework for Action to Achieve the Highest Attainable Standard of Health for Persons with Disabilities 2022-2030: midterm progress report

Across Europe, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions cannot safely tolerate many healthcare settings and other public environments. Excessive noise, light, temperature, fragrances, chemical exposures and other environmental stimuli worsen their symptoms, cause prolonged deterioration, prevent access to care, and exclude adults and children from participation in school, work, and social activities.

Environmental barriers are particularly evident in Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), sometimes referred to as ME/CFS. They also affect people across neurological, neurodevelopmental, respiratory and other chronic conditions.

Excessive noise, light, temperature, fragrances, chemical exposures and other environmental stimuli may worsen their symptoms, cause prolonged or permanente deterioration, prevent access to care, or exclude adults and children from participation in work, school, social activities, and medical appointments.

For those affected, these sensitivities are not matters of preference, but of safety, health and equal rights. The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, recognises that disability results from the interaction between individuals and environmental barriers.

No person should have to choose between receiving care, and being harmed by the environment in which that care is delivered.

What is missing is recognition of environmental accessibility as a cross-cutting dimension of accessibility itself, rather than an issue addressed solely through diagnosis-specific accommodations.

The midterm report recognizes that disability-inclusive health must become a system obligation and identifies the need to support Member States with the “how” of implementation. Accessibility is already one of the components of WHO Europe’s disability-inclusive leadership and governance work. The next step is to ensure that environmental accessibility is no longer absent from its practical meaning.

The European ME Alliance (EMEA) therefore calls on WHO Europe to develop **Environmental Accessibility Requirements** that translate this principle into practice in healthcare guidance, Standard Operating Procedures, emergency preparedness, and climate-health planning, and monitoring mechanisms capable of showing whether environmental accessibility is actually being achieved.

The invisible needs of people with disabilities must be recognized and protected.

The harm to a person's health that is caused by inaccessible environments must no longer be accepted as the price of their participation in everyday activities.

EMEA's position statement on Environmental Accessibility Requirements can be read here and endorsed: https://www.europeanmealliance.org/news-Q42026-EAR.shtml

Organizations endorsing the EMEA statement are below and increasing:

- European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA) - https://www.efna.net
- European Huntington Association (EHA) - https://eurohuntington.org/
- European Patients Organization for Dysimmune & Inflammatory Neuropathies (EPODIN) - https://www.epodin.org/
- ADHD Europe - https://adhdeurope.eu/
- Myeloma Euronet Romania (MeR) - https://myeloma.ro/
- European Council of Autistic People (EUCAP) - https://eucap.eu/