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## **Access to medical cannabis: patients and doctors ask European policy-makers to take decisive action**

On 11 April 2019, **MEP Guillaume Balas** (S&D, FR) together with **Cannabis Europe** organised the event *“Ensuring fair access to medical cannabis for patients in Europe”* at the European Parliament. The purpose of the event was to address the regulatory obstacles patients experience in accessing medical cannabis while discussing possible solutions at European level.

Cannabis-derived medicines and cannabis preparations are recognised for their therapeutic effects. They are used in the treatment of a wide range of diseases, disorders and symptoms (e.g. multiple sclerosis, seizures, depression). They are also instrumental in relieving patients from treatment-induced pain like nausea, e.g. in the case of cancer therapies.

Yet, despite growing awareness and interest within the patient and the medical communities, the regulatory framework for medical cannabis remains fragmented across the European Union. This lack of harmonisation is detrimental to European patients and hampers their access to affordable, high-quality, cannabis-derived products for medical use. **Lisette Wijnkoop** (WIC) explained *“patients can have great benefit from medical cannabis to treat diseases and/or alleviate their pain. Scientific and experience based evidence demonstrates the effects of such treatments. However, legislation in different European countries varies widely. Access to medical cannabis for patients is not always facilitated due to differences in regulation, available products, attitude of prescribers or reimbursement rules for instance.”*

Three main hurdles need to be overcome:

1. European Member States understand medical cannabis in different ways. As a result, not all EU countries allow medical cannabis on their market;
2. Member States enforce different rules for the maximum levels of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) permitted in medicines;
3. Member States have different approaches as regards the production, distribution, licensing, taxation and reimbursement of medical cannabis.

*“Doctors increasingly experience the need of patients to access medical cannabis to cure diseases or decreased the pain they suffer. Doctors are committed to participate in the political and regulatory discussions at EU level via Cannabis Europe to define the best solutions for patients, ensuring a fair access to medical cannabis for them”* said **Dr. Vincenzo Costigliola**, President of the European Association for Predictive, Preventive and Personalised Medicine (EPMA).

**MEP Guillaume Balas** (S&D, FR) stressed that *“It is crucial that Europe develops a coherent strategy to ensure fair access for patients to medical cannabis. In the face of pharmaceutical companies' interests, those of patients must be represented and heard. The creation of Cannabis Europe is thus very good news for future discussions.”*

**Cannabis Europe** is committed to continuing its engagement with EU policy-makers after the European elections (23-26 May 2019), promoting a policy initiative aimed at ensuring patients can benefit from a harmonised framework throughout Europe.

**Note to editors: About Cannabis Europe**

Cannabis Europe is a patient-driven coalition composed of patients organisations, the medical and scientific communities, NGOs and industry, which aims to ensure patient access to high quality, safe, cannabis-derived medicines.

Cannabis Europe works with all medical cannabis value chain stakeholders in efforts to propose agreed-upon solutions to European policy-makers, fully taking into account the needs of patients.

**Our members:**



*European Depression Association*



*European Medical Association*



*European Association for Predictive, Preventive and Personalised Medicine*



*Wetenschappelijk Informatiecentrum Cannabis*



*Families4Access*



*Stichting Patiënten Groep Medicinaal Cannabis Gebruikers*



*CannTalks*



*www.thecmuk.org*

*Centre for Medical Cannabis*

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