

## Hungary joins the European initiative to end malnutrition among patients

Budapest, 13 October 2023 - **At a conference of the European Dietetic Association held today, Hungary has solemnly joined the European initiative to tackle disease-related malnutrition and ensure adequate nutritional care in the healthcare system. Hungary is the twentieth European country to participate in a project aimed at reducing the social, health and economic burden of malnutrition.**

Launched in 2014, the Optimal Nutrition Care for All (ONCA) campaign supports national professional societies, associations and patient groups to effectively screen for nutritional risks and ensure optimal nutritional care in their country's health facilities. The campaign is coordinated by the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) and provides strategic guidance and promotes collaboration with national partners.

Until 2010, ENHA worked to build political support for putting the issue of disease-related malnutrition on the agenda of the European Parliament. It was finally agreed that political support should be translated into action at national level. ENHA has therefore established a partnership with the accession countries to move forward in different ways to ensure that all patients receive optimal nutritional care in their territories. The organisation will also help national professional associations, including the Hungarian ONCA working group, which was set up in the future in cooperation with the Hungarian Society for Artificial Nutrition, the National Association of Hungarian Dietitians and the National Association of Patient Organisations, to ensure that patients in their countries receive adequate nutrition as soon as possible. It will share best practices among campaign participants and measure the impact and results in each country. Promote cooperation between stakeholders and international organisations such as the EU and WHO.

So far, nineteen countries have participated in the ONCA campaign: Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Poland, Turkey, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Spain. Our country joined them at the EFAD conference today.

Annemieke van Ginkel-Res, President of EFAD and Secretary of ENHA, said: "I am extremely proud that Hungary has joined our multi-stakeholder ONCA campaign, which is proving to be very effective in translating the latest findings in nutrition science into policy for the benefit of patients. On behalf of all ONCA countries, we look forward to sharing our experiences with Hungarian patients, professionals and policy makers."

"I see joining the ONCA community as an excellent opportunity not only to reach a wider professional audience, but also to broaden the fight against malnutrition through patient organisations and the involvement of health policy makers." - added Dr Péter Sahin, President of the Hungarian Society for Artificial Nutrition.

"The success of health care depends not only on the intervention itself, but on the overall health of the individual, of which nutritional status is important. It makes a difference whether someone is underweight or overweight when they go into hospital for a major operation. What and how the patient eats and drinks before, during and after the operation and later during recovery must also be

carefully planned. Appropriate nutritional therapy has been shown to reduce mortality, complications and hospital length of stay, and its health and economic benefits are unquestionable. This is why the ONCA's goal of providing everyone with access to optimal nutrition must be achieved in Hungary," said Zsuzsanna Szűcs, President of the National Association of Hungarian Dietitians, stressing the importance of the international initiative.

"It is very important that we represent the interests and voice of patients in ONCA and in similar national and international cooperation, because even the most ambitious professional objectives will only be successful with the involvement, education and information of the stakeholders", said Tünde Koltai, President of the Hungarian Association of Patient Organisations and member of the ENHA Board.