

A ray of hope for thousands of babies in Europe: new standards of care will save and improve lives across countries

- Newly launched *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* will have an impact on future generations in Europe and beyond
- Standards initiated by the *European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI)* set a new benchmark for the care of preterm and ill babies



Photos (1): MEP Dr Peter Liese signs the Call to Action for Newborn Health in Europe; (2): The speakers of the launch workshop in the European Parliament, hosted by MEP Prof. Dr Angelika Niebler (copyright: EFCNI)

“Babies born preterm do not only have a tough time during the first days or months of life.

Preterm birth may affect us and our families for a lifetime.”

Lukas Mader, 21 years old, born at 25 weeks of gestation

Brussels, 28 November 2018 – Preterm birth, before the 37th week of pregnancy, and birth complications are the leading causes of death in children under the age of five in Europe and beyond. Globally, 2.6 million children died in the first month of life in 2016. In Europe, more than 690,000 babies were born preterm in 2014*. Behind every number, there is a personal destiny and family involved. Survivors of preterm birth or other birth complications often have to cope with life-long physical, emotional, and financial challenges. At the same time, the healthcare provided to these children today varies widely throughout Europe. However, the lives of these children could be saved or

improved through feasible means: by providing the best care from birth until school age, regardless of their place of birth. The *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* that were launched at an event in the European Parliament on 28 November present such a solution and mark a new era in newborn care. Providing new practical recommendations for the care provided for preterm and ill babies, they will have a decisive influence on the lives of future generations. The standards have been published in an editorial by *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* (see [link](#)).

From patients for patients: why are these standards so unique?

Addressing various aspects of care from the time of birth until school age, the standards are the first of their kind and give practical guidance for optimal (medical) care of preterm and ill babies. For the first time, such recommendations have been initiated by a patient organisation and, working hand in hand with healthcare professionals, parents (representing the little patients – preterm and ill babies) have been involved in absolutely every step in setting up this new framework. Developed over five years through the voluntary commitment of about 220 renowned international healthcare experts, patient representatives and further stakeholders, the newly launched standards are supported by more than 150 healthcare professional societies and parent organisations.

Launch in the European Parliament and Call to Action

After an event at the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the European Union, the *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* were presented to the public for the first time on 28 November at the European Parliament, kindly hosted by MEP Professor Dr Angelika Niebler and MEP Dr Peter Liese. In addition, a *Call to Action* was presented which calls upon policy makers, hospital administrators, insurers, professional societies, patient associations, and industry to work together on the implementation of the standards at national level. Many politicians, the project's experts and supporters, parent representatives and key stakeholders and speakers from organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) joined the launch events and signed the *Call to Action*.

The hosts MEP Professor Dr Angelika Niebler and MEP Dr Peter Liese from the European Parliamentary Interest Group on Maternal and Neonatal Health strongly support the standards: “In the long run, the health of newborn babies concerns us all. For us as European politicians, it

is not only a great honour, but also a moral obligation to support the implementation of the *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* presented today at the European Parliament. They will set the course for Europe's next generations. Putting the most vulnerable patients in the centre of care and respecting the rights of newborns wherever they are born, the standards will help reduce health inequalities in Europe and beyond. We fully commit to the standards and their *mission: possible.*"

Silke Mader, Chairwoman and Co-Founder of EFCNI was thrilled about the successful launch: "As a mother personally experienced with the challenges of preterm birth, I know that a strong partnership between healthcare professionals and parents is the best way to face the emotional rollercoaster of having a preterm or ill baby and to overcome the obstacles. The *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* equally consider the voice of parents and healthcare professionals. They stand for a new mind-set in newborn health and I can hardly wait to put the standards into practice together with our stakeholders. I am so grateful to everyone who contributed to this milestone project and who supports the implementation of the standards over the forthcoming years."

The complete *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health*, the *Call to Action* (in about 20 languages) and further materials are available for download on the website <https://newborn-health-standards.org>

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About the project

The *European Standards of Care for Newborn Health* project is an interdisciplinary collaboration to develop standards of care for key topics in newborn health. The standards and the *Call to Action* are supported by 108 healthcare professional societies and 50 parent organisations.

In 2017, the project was awarded one of the most innovative Landmarks 2017 by the initiative Germany – Land of Ideas. The project was made possible thanks to the voluntary contribution and commitment of the project members and the financial support by the project industry partners AbbVie, Baxter, Nestlé Nutrition Institute, Philips Avent, Philips, and Shire. Thanks to Dräger for supporting the project from 2013 till 2015.



About EFCNI

The European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI) is the first pan-European organisation and network to represent the interests of preterm and newborn infants and their families. It brings together parents, healthcare experts from different disciplines, and scientists with the common goal of improving long-term health of preterm and newborn children. EFCNI's vision is to ensure the best start in life for every baby. EFCNI receives funding from its corporate partners AbbVie, Baxter, Nestlé Nutrition Institute, Novartis, Philips AVENT, Shire, DSM and Natus as well as from other private companies and individual donors. In addition, the foundation receives funding from the European Union's *Horizon 2020* research and innovation programme.

For more information please visit: <https://www.efcni.org>

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