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## **EUROPEAN MYELOMA PATIENT ORGANISATIONS ANNOUNCE DECISION TO MERGE**

European patient organisations EUROPEAN MYELOMA PLATFORM and MYELOMA EURONET have today officially announced at the European Hematology Association Meeting in London that they have taken the decision to merge. Joining forces will provide a stronger network and offer huge benefits to myeloma patients and their families across Europe.

Following several productive discussions over recent months, the two organisations have jointly taken the decision to merge and to create an entirely new European-wide organisation representing the interests of patients through national and local myeloma groups.

Both organisations strongly believe that the support, education and advocacy needs of myeloma patients and their families across Europe will be better served by one dedicated organisation.

A merger team made up of representatives from both organisations has been created and has been working over recent months towards a merger.

The decision to merge was taken at each organisation's respective Annual General Meetings in May. The intention now is to finalise the details of the new Network prior to and anticipated launch at the ECCO/ESMO meeting in Stockholm in September 2011.

Speaking about the merger Joao Salazar from EUROPEAN MYELOMA PLATFORM said "The case for a merger is compelling and now is the time. Both the challenges and opportunities in the field of myeloma are considerable and these are best dealt with head on as one organisation and not as two."

From a MYELOMA EURONET perspective, Anita Waldmann said “I am thrilled that both organisations have taken the decision to merge. This will make our work more effective, efficient and sustainable. Myeloma patients and their families across Europe will benefit from this development – that is what matters – they are central to all our efforts.”

Prof Gareth Morgan, a myeloma expert from London, England and a board member of the EUROPEAN MYELOMA NETWORK said “I welcome this important development. It has been confusing to have two organisations – by combining forces doctors can now get behind supporting one organisation.”

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Notes to editor:

- Myeloma is an incurable, complex and debilitating cancer of plasma cells
- Plasma cells are found in the bone marrow and are responsible for protecting the body against infection and viruses
- It affects on average 40/50 per million of the population in most European countries
- 15-20% of patients die within 60 days of diagnosis and about 30% are alive after five years
- Despite these harsh statistics, survival in myeloma is improving at a faster rate than almost any other cancer
- This is in part due to earlier diagnosis and the availability of new effective treatments
- Myeloma is treated with chemotherapy, steroids and novel anti-cancer drugs such as bortezomib, lenalidomide and thalidomide. Younger and/or fitter patients may also receive a stem cell transplant
- There are several challenges facing myeloma including access to clinical studies as well as the ability of health systems to pay for the new effective treatments and treatment combinations
- The role of generics and diagnostics is beginning to play a huge role in treatment and is expected to lead to further significant improvements in survival over the next few years