

International Respiratory Coalition

Building the movement for
better respiratory health



INTERNATIONAL
RESPIRATORY
COALITION

Introduction

A message from Professor Anita Simonds, Chair of the International Respiratory Coalition

Respiratory disease is remarkable in its scale and its neglect, yet it has historically been under-prioritised and underfunded. Too often, diagnosis comes late, care is fragmented, and the economic and human costs continue to mount.

This is what the International Respiratory Coalition (IRC) is working to improve. By uniting national coalitions of clinicians, persons living with respiratory diseases, and organisations, we are building the collective momentum that no single country or organisation could generate alone.

The evidence base is strong. The clinical will is there. What closes the gap between what we know and what governments do is organised, sustained advocacy, and that is what this community does.

We have the coalitions, the tools and the momentum. The only question is how quickly governments will choose to act.



Prof. Anita Simonds
Chair, International Respiratory Coalition

Who we are

The International Respiratory Coalition

The International Respiratory Coalition (IRC) was founded in 2021 by the European Respiratory Society (ERS) and European Lung Foundation (ELF) to address one of global health's most overlooked challenges: respiratory disease. It is a leading cause of death and disability, and yet a significant proportion of this burden is preventable.

IRC's mission is to unite national coalitions of clinicians, patient advocates, scientists and policymakers to push governments to act – establishing funded national respiratory strategies that address prevention, treatment and care. The ultimate goal is to reduce respiratory disease-related mortality by a third globally by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Since 2026, IRC has operated under an industry sponsorship model, reflecting the coalition's growth and allowing a sharper focus on advocacy. IRC leadership is provided by ERS and ELF. Funding support is provided by AstraZeneca, Chiesi Group, GSK, MSD, Sanofi and Regeneron. The IRC is also working to identify and engage with European and/or international stakeholders whose work aligns with the goals of the coalition.

In 2023, eight major lung conditions had a significant impact across the population in the WHO European Region:

Deaths per year

Approximately 122 deaths per 100,000 population, at 1.2 million deaths

Total cases per year

10,210 cases per 100,000 population, approximately 96.6 million cases

Societal cost per year

€794.6 billion is the estimated societal cost

Source: international-respiratory-coalition.org/lung-facts/countries/europe/

Our manifesto

What we are calling for

The IRC is calling on governments and policymakers to establish funded national respiratory strategies, which include prevention, new models of care, ambitious measurable targets and accountable leadership, focusing on better:



Prevention of respiratory diseases.

Implementing preventative approaches, increasing vaccination coverage across all ages, and addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental pollution.



Access to the right treatment at the right time.

Lung health checks to aid earlier and more accurate diagnosis. Ensuring integrated primary, secondary and tertiary care, improving access to evidence-based therapy and implementing respiratory guidelines at every level of care.



Action on reducing inequalities.

Putting people and their rights at the centre of respiratory health and addressing the social determinants of poor health to improve accessibility and delivery of healthcare for marginalised and hard-to-reach communities.



Prioritisation of research, data and workforce development to improve care.

Focusing on innovations in treatment and care to advance lung health, including AI, real-world data, novel therapies and targeted research strategies focused on inequality and areas of greatest need.

Our manifesto

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Respiratory health has not been given the same attention as other areas of health. People living with lung conditions understand the consequences of that every day. Their lived experience is essential to shaping policies and services that not only raise the priority of lung health but also deliver the improvements patients truly need.

Phil Taverner

Chair, European Lung Foundation



Our community

23 national coalitions. One shared mission.

Respiratory health does not improve through clinical expertise alone. It requires clinicians, patient advocates, researchers and policymakers working together. That is what IRC's national coalitions make possible.

IRC supports 23 national coalitions, each at a different stage but all united by the same goal: a funded national respiratory health strategy in their country.

Each coalition brings together the full range of voices needed to influence government: healthcare professionals who understand the clinical picture, persons living with respiratory diseases and carers who bring relevant lived experience, researchers who provide the evidence, and policymakers who can translate advocacy into action. A unified coalition speaking with one voice is far more powerful than any single organisation working alone.



Our community

Armenia · Austria · Belgium · Croatia · France · Germany
Greece · Hungary · Ireland · Israel · Italy · Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan · Moldova · Netherlands · Poland · Portugal
Romania · Spain · Sweden · Türkiye · Ukraine · United Kingdom

What has our community achieved?



Italy

Influenced by the Italian national coalition, Italy has set up its first-ever national board to tackle respiratory disease



Moldova

The national coalition used IRC data to support the launch of Moldova's sleep medicine centre



Belgium

The Belgian coalition are developing a national chronic respiratory disease plan and policy call to action



Poland

Coalition advocacy helped make lung cancer screening a permanent component of Poland's guaranteed healthcare services



Lung Facts

The data that makes the case for policy action

Making the case to governments requires evidence. IRC's Lung Facts resource makes that evidence freely accessible to anyone working to advance respiratory health.

Lung Facts provides key epidemiological and economic data for 14 major respiratory conditions across 21 countries in the WHO European Region, with individual datasets for each participating IRC country. It draws on the Global Burden of Disease study and the most robust published evidence available, giving coalitions, clinicians and policymakers the figures they need to make a compelling, data-driven argument for investment in respiratory care.

What Lung Facts covers:

Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency · Asthma · Bronchiectasis
COPD · COVID-19 · Cystic fibrosis · Influenza
Interstitial lung diseases · Lower respiratory tract infections
Lung cancer · Mesothelioma · Obstructive sleep apnoea
Pulmonary arterial hypertension · Tuberculosis

Access Lung Facts: international-respiratory-coalition.org/lung-facts



Grants

Enabling action at the national level

IRC provides two types of grants to support national coalitions in moving from ambition to action:

Seed funding

For coalitions getting started: funding to bring together the key stakeholders — clinicians, patient advocates, policymakers and others — needed to establish a coalition and begin developing a national strategy.

Project grants — up to €50,000

For established coalitions working on strategic advocacy projects. Grants have supported projects including vaccine delivery programmes, sleep service improvement initiatives and community respiratory health outreach.

So far we have awarded...

8

seed funding grants

€280,000

to support IRC project grants



Grants

IRC grants support projects in...



France

Building momentum towards a national respiratory health plan



Portugal

An integrative approach to sleep apnea management



Greece

Mobile lung health unit project: overcoming geographic inequalities in Greece



The Netherlands

Strengthening medical prevention through vaccinations in people with lung diseases



Israel

Tele-pulmonary rehabilitation to improve compliance in patients with chronic lung diseases



Ukraine

Inspire Ukraine: a respiratory health initiative

Find out more about IRC grants: international-respiratory-coalition.org/toolkits



Get involved

Join the movement

Whether you are a clinician, patient organisation, policymaker or potential supporter, there are ways to get involved with IRC and its national coalitions.

Find out more about how your organisation can contribute:
international-respiratory-coalition.org/join-us

Our work is made possible with the contributions of many organisations

IRC leadership is provided by:



Additional stakeholders include the [IRC National Coalitions](#) and:



Funding support is provided by:



