



**International
Diabetes Federation
Europe**



Dear EU Leaders,

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, we, young people with diabetes, face a multitude of new challenges.

Beyond the long-term social and economic consequences of the crisis which we will have to bear, COVID-19 has already had a major, adverse, effect on our incomes, our current and future employment opportunities and career paths, not to mention our access to adequate education and training, and to healthcare. Living with any form of diabetes as a young person only adds to the burden of the pandemic, as non-communicable diseases such as diabetes have been identified as a key risk factor for developing serious forms of the disease. We live in unprecedented times when everything we know and understand is suddenly being challenged.

August 12 is International Youth Day, and this year's theme is Youth Engagement for Action. IDF Europe prides itself on its mission to raise the voice of all people living with diabetes across Europe and unite all stakeholders to improve their lives. **Today, we would like to speak up for all young people living with diabetes and ensure their message is heard and listened to.**

Listening to youth voices has never been more critical as this is our future at stake.

As young persons living with diabetes, we are deeply engaged with our communities. We lead activities designed to raise awareness of diabetes among the general public; we provide support and education to people living with diabetes, and we fight to end the stigma/discrimination, which far too often remains attached to diabetes, in activities which others take for granted such as engaging in sports and being treated equally in all respects at school, or when looking for a job. Being able to manage what is a hugely complex disease, consisting of many different types, serenely and as best as possible, would both lower the psychological burden of the disease, and help reduce the risks of life-changing complications which sub-optimally managed diabetes can pose.

We want to create a dialogue with healthcare professionals and policymakers. Your action as political and thought leaders as well as your influence in developing resilient healthcare systems for the future are urgently needed to improve the knowledge and understanding of this multifaceted disease among the general population as well as all key health stakeholders; foster the measures required to lower the risk of people developing type 2 diabetes and diabetes complications; and provide access to the medicines, innovation and care we need to live a normal and healthy life.



*I am 22 years old. I have lived with insulin resistance since 2016. I am a student. I volunteer and I am a part of the Polish Diabetes Association in Złotoryja, the headquarters of which is in Warsaw (Poland). I love travelling, volunteering, learning new languages and photography.”
Oliwia Kaczmarek (Poland)*

Young people have shown the impact they can have by making their voices heard. Will you listen to our calls, step up and take action?



*"I am 24 years old and I have been living with diabetes since 1999. I'm born in Ghent, Belgium. In the same city, I went to university and graduated as a Master of Science in Civil Engineering. Besides my interest in engineering, I'm active as a youth advocate at the local level in the Flemish Diabetes Federation (Diabetes Liga). Currently, I'm attending the Youth Leadership Lab of IDF Europe. Furthermore, I'm passionate about sports, music and cultural events." » **Melissa De Volder (Belgium)***

Let 2020 be the beginning of a new set of priorities in health for a more equal and fairer Europe

In 2019, 31,100 children were diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in Europe. The same year, 9% of the European population was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and this number is increasing every year. Improving prevention and support, developing more community-based and primary care, and fostering the adoption of new digital tools and new care models is essential to build more resilient and inclusive healthcare systems. Facilitating equal access to all required treatments, including novel therapies and new technologies, is also a necessary part of the equation towards a fairer and healthier society.

Your goals as European leaders are not different from ours as young people living with diabetes. We are ready to commit to a more resilient and fairer Europe. Only with your help, vision, and collaboration, coupled with more meaningful engagement between young

people and decision-makers, will we be able to make a real difference. In the aftermath of a crisis, which will have a deep and long-lasting impact across our societies, this is even more important.

As young people with diabetes, represented by the International Diabetes Federation Europe Region, we ask you to guarantee a more youth-friendly European Union by increasing the dialogue between us.

We also demand that you make diabetes a priority for action in your region/country; table a debate at the European Parliament on health challenges posed for diabetes; and act decisively to develop policies which:

- Provide added support to all people living with diabetes
- Improve, affordable access to all required medicines, technologies, and care to improve the quality of life of PwD
- Step up awareness-raising and education campaigns to combat stigma and discrimination
- Support the move towards increased digitalisation and reorganisation of healthcare systems



*"I am 25 and I have been living with type 1 diabetes since 2000. I am from Belgrade, Serbia. I was a professional swimmer and have a BA in Sociology and an MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University. The topic of my MA thesis is: Stigma, Self-stigma and Resistance: Life stories of people with type 1 diabetes in Belgrade, which I defended with honors. I am a European Young Leader in Diabetes and a World Leader Trainee. I am an activist in the organisation for battling against diabetes in Belgrade (Plavi krug) and the Diabetes Association of Serbia. I am interested in Sociology of Health, gender equality, feminism and sustainability, among others." **Jelisaveta Fotic (Serbia)***

An end to stigma/discrimination as well as a healthier and fairer society will benefit everybody. For us, the decisions you make today will have consequences which we will have to live with for a very long time.

Alone, neither policy makers nor the young generations can achieve real change. ***We rely on you to help us create the sustainable and inclusive future that will be ours.*** We believe that on crucial issues such as health, equality and sustainability, inclusive dialogue and cooperation will hold the keys to success. ***We have to work together to ensure that the lockdown generation does not become a lost generation but can also live up to its dreams.***

The IDF Europe Youth Group - YOURAH