



## 6 MILLION DIAGNOSES FOR COELIAC DISEASE STILL MISSING IN EUROPE

Coeliac disease is a lifelong autoimmune disease caused by an intolerance to gluten. Gluten is contained in wheat (including spelt and khorasan wheat), rye, barley, oats or their hybridized strains, and products thereof.

### **1 person out of 100 suffers from coeliac disease**

It therefore follows that in Europe the number of people affected by coeliac disease should be **around 7 million**, but only 12%-15% of people affected by coeliac disease actually receive a diagnosis.

Moreover, in Europe the average interval between the appearance of first symptoms and diagnosis is **over 10 years**.

If coeliac disease remains undiagnosed and the afflicted person continues to consume gluten, it can lead to a multitude of severe complications, such as anaemia and in a worst case scenario even to small bowel cancer.

### **All over Europe people with coeliac disease need accurate and fast diagnoses**

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that every person has 'the right to the highest attainable standard of health'. For those with coeliac disease this means getting diagnosed as a first, very important step. .

On 16 May 2016, the Association Of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS) and its Member societies celebrate International Coeliac Day with the aim to raise awareness on missing diagnoses.

Tunde Koltai, Chair of the AOECS Board says:

*"A proper and quick diagnosis is a human right for people affected by chronic diseases, as coeliac disease is. We call on individuals, organizations and institutions to ensure that people all over Europe have fast access to reliable tests for coeliac disease as soon as they start to experience first symptoms. Coeliac disease can lead to osteoporosis, depression, infertility, repeated miscarriages and even some kind of cancers. This is why it is important to start a gluten-free diet as soon as possible, which is currently the only treatment for coeliac disease."*

If you think you have coeliac disease, you may wish to start reducing or eliminating gluten from your diet because it makes you feel ill. However, the diagnostic tests for coeliac disease look at how the body responds to gluten so it is essential *to continue eating gluten until your doctor has been able to test you*. This will help to achieve accurate results both for the blood test and the gut biopsy.

If you would like more information on how to obtain a diagnosis for coeliac disease or how to manage a gluten-free diet, please contact the national coeliac society in your country. For a list of our Member societies visit [www.aoecs.org/members](http://www.aoecs.org/members).