

## Its origins and its aims

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Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are non-contagious and non-infectious illnesses, generally known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which affect over one million people in Europe. At present, there is no known cause or cure.

Following the identification of IBD as a recognisable chronic illness, specific self-help groups began to appear cross Europe. By the mid 1980s, most of the groups had been formed which now constitute the principal European National Associations for Crohn's and Colitis patients. Further development of these organisations has reflected the growth of IBD diagnosis, the increasing visibility of the benefits of self-help associations and their increasing roles.

Influenced by the European ideal of strength through co-operation, those National IBD Patient Associations considered there was a need for a European-wide umbrella organisation. A number of the national associations' representatives met together in Freiburg in October 1990 to form the European Federation of Crohn's & Ulcerative Colitis Associations, EFCCA was formally established in 1993 in Strasbourg, its constitution was registered in Belgium in 1996. EFCCA is also assisted by a Europe-wide team of eminent Medical Patrons.

EFCCA's aim is to improve the well being of patients with inflammatory bowel disease - i.b.d. and their partners and families through:

- working with and for the EFCCA Member National Associations and others throughout all of Europe
- facilitating the exchange of information and the promotion of cross-frontier activities
- effecting regular contact with the European authorities, doctors, health professionals and organisations and with others world-wide
- the encouragement of scientific research into Crohn's and Colitis (IBD) causes and treatment

Over the past decade, often with EFCCA support and advice, national self-help associations have been set up in Eastern Europe with the result that as at the end of the year 2002 the EFCCA membership has risen to 20 European National IBD Patient Associations

Recognising the need to review its work at the end of the first decade, EFCCA delegates agreed a forward looking Strategy Plan for the early years of the new Millenium and a Mission Statement was introduced. EFCCA's Strategy will be reviewed every three years commencing year 2003 and the plan updated as necessary. EFCCA Mission Statement

To: increase public awareness of Colitis and Crohn's disease (Inflammatory Bowel Disease, IBD); to be a support for our member associations and to liaise with associated healthcare professionals, and related organisations and to encourage research both medical and social.

To: encourage interaction amongst existing Colitis and Crohn's disease Groups within a widening Europe and to assist in the establishment of new associations where they do not exist

To: campaign for improvement in the quality of life and quality of care for those with IBD and as appropriate their partners, families and friends and primarily through our member associations offer them support and information

To: encourage patients and their families to travel and to meet with people from EFCCA member associations and other nationalities, through the provision of relevant information and advice

To: promote and foster equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work.