

# Case Study



BELGIAN  
DIABETES  
FORUM

## How we started

At the end of 2018 several colleagues from the Belgium pharma industry were informed about a new European initiative: the European Diabetes Forum (EUDF). In a nutshell, EUDF was founded as a multi-stakeholder platform in 2018 to unite stakeholders from across the diabetes landscape in Europe in order to present a united voice on the needs of the diabetes community to governments, regulators, payers and others. The aim of EUDF is not only to have a united voice - which is more likely to be heard – but also to establish a definitive program of goals developed by and involving all our members.

## The initial step

**Inspired by this European example, a public affairs professional gathered the public affairs colleagues from the Belgian pharma industry** and they started discussing informally the interest to initiate a Belgian Diabetes Forum (BEDF).

The **purpose** of the coalition building initiative was **defined between the colleagues of industry** (core team): the creation of a Forum where all stakeholders could bring their specific expertise in diabetes to contribute to a sustainable health system by supporting policymakers in their decision-making processes to manage chronic diseases with diabetes as a role model.

The core team started **mapping all relevant stakeholders** in the diabetes landscape and made an initial overview of all recent diabetes related activities in the country such as policy files and requests from the diabetes stakeholders.

With the clear idea to unite forces in Belgium the core team visited a disease expert with a passion and interest in policy making, let's say a HCP who wants to optimise the diabetes care at national level beyond the own practice. With this expert, the core team discussed the initial ideas, feasibility and mapping (which SH to include in the initial discussions). Both diabetes associations Diabetes Liga and Association du Diabète were defined as key stakeholders. These associations have people with diabetes and health care professionals as members.

## Steps towards an inclusive forum



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- In response to the increasing number of people with diabetes, Whyte helped the diabetes community **establish the Belgian Diabetes Forum**.
- Through the association's **secretariat**, strategic **advice**, **public affairs** support, we are building common ground between all diabetes stakeholders in Belgium to achieve effective **policy engagement** and improve the prevention, care and well-being of people with diabetes.



Cases and credentials

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In the coming weeks and months **the core team visited the diabetes associations and several of the leading Belgian disease experts**. There was a clear understanding from the core team that having a forum without the people with diabetes would make no sense. The ideas and at some times the concerns and proposals of the diabetes associations were taken into account.

## The importance of governance and support

All parties involved agreed to organise a brainstorm meeting to discuss an overview of the current challenges for people with diabetes and their caregivers. The core team organised a **brainstorm meeting** in June 2019 with participation of the diabetes associations, HCPs and industry. These representatives decided to form a **first Steering Committee**. This was a very important step towards the professionalization and governance of the BEDF and the participants took the following **decisions**: to set up a Belgian Diabetes Forum focussed on policy shaping, to establish a governance structure (steering committee), to bring together all diabetes stakeholders to speak with one voice and to appoint an agency which can be responsible for the back-office and day to day management. The steering committee initiated a **tender process** and invited the Belgian health policy agencies to participate. The steering committee selected a **policy agency** based on the proposed approach they presented.

The professional support of the agency had as a consequence that the forum became more efficient and productive as all stakeholders were actively engaged in the agreed next steps. The agency had as initial tasks to define a purpose and vision/mission statement and a project plan, to draft a 'Memorandum of Understanding' which can serve as the contractual agreement between the various partners and to draft a time plan. All stakeholders agreed with a memorandum of understanding how to organize ourselves with regards to governance, role and responsibilities, and funding. Appointing an agency as intermediary body helped to gain trust amongst all participants of the BEDF. As a **neutral partner**, it quickly became clear that there where no hidden agenda's from the industry and that the BEDF works with a single goal: to improve the lives of people living with diabetes.

## State of play with bottom-up approach resulting in a 'white paper'



At the end of 2019, the forum was **officially launched** towards policymakers. As of now the forum really exists and was on the map of stakeholders in Belgium. Parallely, the agency conducted a **long series of interviews** with all the relevant **stakeholders** of the Belgian diabetes landscape. The goal was to identify what went well, but also to identify which points still can be improved. This led to the publication of a **white paper** that was open for feedback for the members of the forum but as well to the general public and especially to decision and policymakers. The white paper was launched in June 2020 and was a very **practical guide for discussions** with interested parties and decision makers.

## Important to set priorities: in-depth fora

After the launch of BEDF and based on the additional insights from the outreach, the steering committee established **several in-depth forums** both with members of the Belgian Diabetes Forum and decision makers to discuss and tackle specific projects. At this stage it was crucial to have external experts, the policymakers and decision makers actively engaged and on board in the forums.

There is currently a proposal to initiate a project on diabetes data, written by Belgian public Institutions in collaboration with the Belgian Diabetes Forum experts in order to optimize the data collection, connection and especially the good use of data to optimize care.



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Laurent Crenier

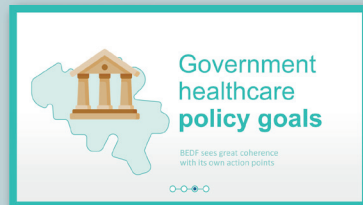
Head of Diabetology Clinic at Erasme Hospital &  
President of Association du Diabète



## From ideas to Implementation

Overall idea is to participate in the calls for proposal coming from the European Commission. This shows how activities at European level can inspire countries to build a local roadmap and take advantage of European funding to optimize the outcomes of people with diabetes at country level. Besides the interest to leverage European projects, the Belgian Diabetes Forum is now a respected partner by Belgian authorities and there are ongoing discussions with the Minister of Health to optimize the integrated care pathways.

## Stakeholder outreach | Visual support



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On September 3, the BEDF takes a new important step and will also engage directly with people with diabetes and policy makers in a public event in Brussels to further engage the community and keep the plans and projects up to date and most important, to be inclusive to all people, associations and public institutions that want to optimize the live of people with diabetes.

