Resolution on combating cancer in the enlarged EU

2008/2547(RSP) - 10/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following a debate on 9 April 2008, the European Parliament adopts, by 621 votes to 10 with 6 abstentions, a resolution on combating cancer in the enlarged EU.

Parliament points out that, according to estimates by the International Agency for Research on Cancer , one in three Europeans is diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime and one in four Europeans dies from the disease. In 2006 there were nearly 2.3 million new cancer cases and over 1 million cancer deaths within the EU. Most deaths were in people with lung cancer, colorectal cancer and breast cancer. However, the WHO estimates that at least one third of all cancer cases are preventable and that another third of cancers could be cured if detected early and treated appropriately.

Parliament calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to take appropriate action on prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, including palliative care, in order to reduce the significant approaching increase in the burden of cancer resulting from demographic changes in the coming decades, including provision of adequate financial support for coordinated actions and appropriate capacity building. It calls on the Commission to set up an inter-institutional EU Cancer Task Force composed of Members from the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament which shall meet on a regular basis, to collect and exchange best practice for prevention, (including reducing occupational and environmental exposure to carcinogens and other substances contributing to the development of cancer), screening and treatment and to provide leadership for improved cancer control in Europe. The EU Task Force should, promote new measures as well as existing screening projects that can help increase the proportion of the population taking part in cancer screening measures by at least 50% in each of the Member States by 2018. Members support the Slovenian EU Presidency, which has made cancer one of its priorities in 2008, and call on all future presidencies to continue to make cancer a priority.

The Commission and Member States are asked to ensure that cancer medicines are uniformly available to all patients who need them in all Member States. Parliament urges the promotion of information campaigns on cancer screening directed at the general public and all healthcare providers, as well as exchange of best practice on the use of preventive or early-detection measures, such as cost-effective integration of appropriate human papilloma virus (HPV) testing for cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination to protect young women from cervical cancer, or the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test for the early detection of prostate cancer in men over 50 years of age.

Parliament makes a wide range of recommendations to the Commission, Member States and the Council, inter alia:

-to review the European Code Against Cancer on a regular basis and to promote it by means of education campaigns targeting specific population groups;

-to revise the existing Recommendation on cancer screening to take account of the rapid development of new technologies and to include more types of cancers and additional techniques of early diagnosis when these are warranted scientifically;

-to establish a dynamic and continuous approach to fighting cancer that is based on scientific progress, and to this end to establish: an advisory committee on cancer prevention to evaluate existing evidence and data; a special advisory committee on early detection of cancer to ensure that future revisions of the recommendation are incorporated rapidly and efficiently;

-to encourage initiatives with the aim of preventing cancer through reduction of occupational and environmental exposure to carcinogens and other substances contributing to the development of cancer and promotion of healthy lifestyles;

- to ensure that Community legislation contains incentives to engage in research with a view to developing new evidence-based medicines and treatments;

-to allocate funds within the Seventh Framework Programme in order to encourage research and innovation in the areas of primary prevention, screening and early detection, and new anti-cancer medicines and treatments;

-to revise Directive 2001/20/EC (the Clinical Trials Directive) to encourage more academic research on cancer, and in particular research into cancer screening and early detection.

Parliament calls on the Commission, the Member States and the European Chemicals Agency, in the context of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 (REACH), to adopt the candidate list of substances of very high concern, which includes substances that are carcinogenic, as a top priority before 1 June 2008, so as to make possible the application of Article 33(2) of REACH, which allows consumers to request information about carcinogens in consumer items, enabling them to avoid such items if they so desire.

Lastly, Member States are urged implement statutory cancer registration with European standardised terminology in order to provide the capacity for population-based evaluation of prevention, screening and treatment programmes, survival rates and comparability of data between Member States.