Declaration on rheumatic diseases

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In a declaration adopted by the European Parliament on 5 June 2008, the Parliament considers the issue of rheumatic diseases, recalling that they are chronic complaints which cause pain, suffering and disability.

The Parliament also notes that 30% to 40% of people have musculoskeletal symptoms (100 million people in Europe) and that rheumatic diseases represent the main cause of disability and premature retirement among workers.

Bearing in mind that a majority of people over 70 present chronic or recurrent rheumatic symptoms, MEPs call on the Commission and the Council to:

attach more importance to rheumatic diseases in the new Community strategy on health, given their high social and economic costs;

encourage Member States to establish, and promote the implementation of, national plans to fight rheumatic diseases;

develop a Community strategy on rheumatic diseases and draw up a Council recommendation on the early diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic diseases;

develop a strategy to improve access to information and medical treatment.

Lastly, the Parliament notes that the adoption of social and health policies based on an analysis of the needs of those with rheumatic diseases would reduce the economic and social costs associated with such diseases (1 to 1.5% of GNI in developed countries).