Joint programming of research activities: measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's

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In September 2008, the Competitiveness Council recognised the major societal impact of neurodegenerative diseases (ND), and in particular Alzheimer's disease (AD), in the context of an ageing society and adopted conclusions recommending the launching of a common European initiative in this field by bringing together Member States, the Commission and other stakeholders. Stock taking of existing initiatives at national and European level in this field is necessary for streamlining the use of Europe's public R&D funds through enhanced cooperation and coordination between national public R&D programmes.

This Commission Staff Working Document has been prepared as a background paper to the Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on Joint Programming in research on neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer’s disease. With the aim of clarifying the context of this proposal and to document and justify the added value of a joint European action in this field, it provides a first non-exhaustive picture of research on neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer’s disease, which is currently carried out or planned across Europe.

This first analysis illustrates the significant diversity of the research landscape on neurodegenerative diseases in Europe, in many of its aspects such as levels of investments, funding mechanisms, public-private involvement, priority themes, topics and approaches, etc, but it also highlights the potential for complementarity of current actions and initiatives.

The information – even though not exhaustive – provides a set of elements which outlines the reasons why a joint European approach in this area could contribute to increase the effectiveness of research on neurodegenerative diseases in Europe, open the path to potential therapies to the benefit of affected individuals and their families, and help to establish the rationale for the proposed Recommendation.