Resolution on Joint Programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's disease

2009/2742(RSP) - 12/11/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Joint Programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer’s disease, in response to the Commission proposal on the subject.

The resolution had been tabled by the EPP, S&D, Greens/ALE, ECR, GUE/NGL and ALDE groups.

Recalling that the cost of dementia disorders in the EU-25 in 2005 was estimated at EUR 130 billion, or an average of approximately EUR 21 000 per year per person affected by dementia, Parliament welcomes the proposed pilot project for Joint Programming of Research in this field. It believes that the instrument of joint programming could be very valuable in reducing fragmentation of the research effort, leading as it would to a pooling of a critical mass of skills, knowledge and financial resources. Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease are one of Europe’s greatest challenges in mental health, affecting more than seven million citizens of the EU, a number that will probably double in the coming decades as a result of the ageing of the population. Parliament takes the view that the fight against Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease must therefore respond to a dual challenge: providing care for an increasing number of patients on a day-to-day basis and securing more resources so that the number of patients steadily decreases in the future.

Members call upon **Member States** to do the following:

- to engage actively in the definition, development and implementation of a common research agenda in the field of neurodegenerative diseases;
- to improve epidemiological data on Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, in particular in asymptomatic phases and before the onset of incapacity;
- to promote research programmes that give great importance to patient choice and perspective.

Parliament points to the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in this field, encompassing diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and social research into the welfare of patients and their families and carers. It believes that early diagnostic tests, research into risk factors (such as the environment) and criteria for early diagnosis are crucial. Members see clear added value in conducting large-scale epidemiological and clinical studies in transnational collaboration. Research programmes should concentrate, as a priority, on prevention, biomarkers (include susceptibility genetics), methods of diagnostic imaging, early diagnosis methods based on a multidisciplinary approach, standardisation of criteria and diagnostic tools and the creation of broad-based databases that can be used for population studies, treatment strategies and clinical studies of new chemical and biological substances, vaccines and technologies.

Parliament asks the **Council and Commission**, as appropriate, to do the following:

- to build on existing structures in setting up this pilot project, avoiding the creation of new bureaucratic structures, and to collaborate where possible with industry in order to benefit from all available resources and experience, while ensuring independence and autonomy;

- to include the problems of dementia in all EU initiatives related to disease prevention, particularly in connection with early diagnosis, cardiovascular health and physical activity;
- to adopt a recommendation inviting Member States to inform the public about lifestyle changes that can delay and prevent the onset of neurodegenerative diseases, especially Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and to promote 'brain-healthy lifestyles';
- to consider launching a European Year of the Brain in order to raise awareness of brain-related diseases associated with ageing, and measures to prevent them;
- to involve representatives of patient and carer organisations and healthcare providers appropriately in the pilot project for Joint Programming of research in this field;
- to consider using Article 182(5) of the Treaty of Lisbon as the legal basis for all future proposals on joint programming of research activities, since this could provide a more appropriate legal basis for future joint programming initiatives in the field of research.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Commission to involve Parliament properly in any decision to support this pilot project and any future joint programming initiative in the field of research with funding from the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development, and to inform Parliament of the progress and results of this pilot project.