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

2009/0113(CNS) - 03/12/2009

The Council adopted **conclusions** welcoming the Commission communication on a European initiative on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (see COM(2009)0380) and the recommendations by the Commission on the launch of the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) on combating neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's.

On this basis, it emphasises that Joint Programming in research on neurodegenerative diseases will contribute to the reduction of fragmentation of research efforts of Member States in this field and encourage the pooling of skills, knowledge and resources, with a view to advancing research on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment and to alleviating the burden of neurodegenerative diseases on patients, their carers and society. In this context, it also invites the Commission to offer support in the implementation of this initiative and avoid duplication in implementing the Framework Programme.

Member States are invited to:

1) Develop a common vision, based on a multidisciplinary approach, on how cooperation and coordination in the field of research at the European level can improve knowledge, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's, in order to ensure the efficiency of the joint efforts of Member States in fighting neurodegenerative diseases.

2) Develop a Strategic Research Agenda establishing medium to long term research needs and objectives in the area of neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's. The strategic research agenda should be further developed towards an implementation plan establishing priorities and timelines and specifying the action, instruments and resources required for its implementation.

The following actions could be considered, subject to the needs of the Strategic Research Agenda, as part of an implementation plan:

- identify and exchange information on relevant national programmes and research activities;
- reinforce joint foresight and technology assessment capacities at the level of basic, medical, health and social services research;
- identify areas or research activities that would benefit from coordination or joint calls for proposals or pooling of resources in areas such as the development of new prevention and treatment strategies, new imaging technologies and biomarkers;
- exchange information resources and best practices in areas such as the comparison of healthcare systems, including long term care and informal care settings;
- define the modalities for research to be undertaken jointly in the areas identified above;

- share, where appropriate, existing research studies and infrastructures or develop new ones in areas such as coordinated registries, biobanks for blood samples and tissues or the development of animal models for the study of these diseases;

- development of new diagnostic tools particularly for early diagnosis;

- network centres dedicated to research on neurodegenerative diseases in areas such as clinical trials, standardisation of diagnostic criteria and diagnostic instruments;

- as appropriate, involve representatives of patient and care organisations and healthcare providers in this pilot initiative, including stakeholders from the private sector;

- identify effective measures to ensure the optimum dissemination and the use of research findings.

3) Actively support the work of the newly established management structure in the field of neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's disease, mandated to establish common conditions, rules and procedures for cooperation and coordination and to monitor the implementation of the strategic research agenda.

4) Jointly implement the Strategic Research Area, including through their national research programmes or other national research activities.

5) Cooperate with the Commission with a view to exploring possible Commission initiatives to assist Member States in developing and implementing the common research agenda.

The Commission is invited to:

- act as a facilitator by providing ad-hoc and complementary measures to support the pilot Joint Programming initiative. Those measures should include support to the management structure and the establishment of the strategic research agenda, the provision of data, information and analysis on the state of the art in this field in Member States and at European level;

- explore how best to contribute with complementary measures to the strategic research agenda and to its implementation plan via EU funding instruments;

- look into possible forms of consultation and cooperation on this subject with scientifically-advanced groupings at international level;

- regularly report to the Council and the European Parliament on the progress and results of this Joint Programme Initiative.