Breast cancer in the European Union

2002/2279(INI) - 05/06/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Karin JÖNS (PES, Germany) on breast cancer. (Please see the summary of 24/04/03.) As well as setting a target of creating, by 2008, the conditions required for a 25% reduction in the average breast-cancer mortality rate, Member States should also aim to reducing to 5% the disparity between the Member States in the five-year survival rate. This follows from the 1999 Eurocare Study, which demonstrated that in the various Member States, there were unacceptable disparities by up to 16% in the survival rates of breast cancer patients. These were attributed to, inter alia, disparities in access to screening, diagnosis and treatment. Parliament expressed its concern at the possible consequences of the granting by the European Patent Office of patents on BRC AC 1 and BRC A2 ('breast cancer') genes. It asked the EPO to reconsider the patenting of these genes. The Council, the Commission and the Member States must ensure that the human genetic code is freely available for research throughout the world and that medical applications of certain human genes are not impeded by monopolies based on patents. Finally, Parliament was concerned at the comparatively poor survival rates for women suffering from breast cancer in the accession countries. The Commission is asked to arrange a structured exchange of experience with the future Member States.