Resolution on breast cancer in the enlarged European Union

2006/2611(RSP) - 25/10/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following three oral questions addressed to the Commission, the European Parliament adopted by 641 votes to 11, with 4 abstentions, a resolution on breast cancer in the enlarged European Union, tabled by the PES, EPP-ED, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, IND/DEM and UEN groups.

The Parliament calls on the Commission to present the progress report, which Parliament called for by 2006 in its resolution of 5 June 2003, on the steps taken by the Member States to lower breast cancer mortality rates. It also calls on the Commission to present in 2007 the report on implementation of cancer screening programmes in accordance with Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003.

The resolution recalls that breast cancer is the commonest cancer in women. In fact, 275 000 women contract breast cancer in the European Union every year and 88 000 die from this illness. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), breast cancer mortality rates vary among the EU Member States by over 50%.

Although the EU guidelines for breast cancer screening were first drawn up in 1992, mammographic screening is currently only offered nationwide in 11 Member States (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom).

In order to ensure equal access to early screening and breast cancer treatment, the Parliament calls on the Member States to:

- **introduce nationwide breast screening**, whereby all women aged between 50 and 69 will be offered a mammogram in line with the EU guidelines at two-year intervals;
- ensure nationwide provision of **interdisciplinary breast units** in accordance with the EU guidelines by 2016;
- adopt better **information policies** on the importance of breast screening, paying particular attention to the problems to young women affected by breast cancer;
- set up information and advice centres on **hereditary breast cancer**;
- make use of the possibility of providing **further training** for medical personnel via the European Social Fund.

MEPs call for stepped-up support for **research into breast cancer prevention**, including research on the effects of harmful chemicals and environmental pollutants, nutrition, lifestyle, genetic factors, and the interactions of all these. They also call for the links between breast cancer and potential risk factors such as tobacco, alcohol and hormones to be investigated.

The Commission is called upon to:

- in the context of the Seventh Research Framework Programme, to promote the development of **therapies with minimal side-effects**, as well as comprehensive investigations of the causes of breast cancer;
- continue research into **alternatives to conventional forms** of mammography, such as digital mammography;

- present **up-to-date, reliable data** on the situation of women with breast cancer and to point out the need for national cancer registers in all the Member States;
- draw up a **charter for the protection of the rights** of breast cancer patients and chronically sick people in the workplace;
- point out to the **new Member States** and accession countries that the ERDF and the pre-accession funds can be used to create health care infrastructure.

Lastly, the Parliament calls urgently for the future **financing of the European cancer network** to be guaranteed, so that the work on EU guidelines for the profession of breast care nurse and for a certification protocol for breast units can be completed. The Commission is called upon to provide funding for the further development of blood-based tests (biomarker tests) within the Seventh Research Framework Programme.