



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 30 September 2008 (03.10)  
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**RECH 288  
SAN 203**

**OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS**

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of : Competitiveness Council on 25 and 26 September 2008

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Subject : Council conclusions concerning a common commitment by the Member States to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's

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Delegations will find attached Council conclusions concerning a common commitment by the Member States to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, as adopted by the Competitiveness Council at its meeting on 26 September 2008.

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**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**  
**CONCERNING A COMMON COMMITMENT BY THE MEMBER STATES**  
**TO COMBAT NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES,**  
**PARTICULARLY ALZHEIMER'S**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the RTD priorities in the 5th and 6th Framework Programmes of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (FPs) concerning studies on diseases and disorders among the older population, including Alzheimer's;
- the thematic priority "Health" in the Specific Programme "Cooperation" implementing the 7th Framework Programme (2006-2013)<sup>1</sup> and its activities in translational research, for the improvement of human health, targeting brain research and related diseases, especially diseases linked to brain senescence;
- the strategic objective of promoting good health in an ageing Europe, established on the basis of the Commission White Paper "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013"<sup>2</sup>, which stressed the need to intensify research in the interests of palliative care and a better understanding of neurodegenerative diseases;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 400, 30.12.2006, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> 14689/07.

1. RECOGNISES the challenges posed by neurodegenerative diseases, of which the increasing number of diagnosed cases is closely related to an ageing European population. CONSIDERS that the stakes are significant both in terms of human suffering and the social and health burden, and on the grounds of the complexity of preventive or curative responses to such diseases. The preponderance of Alzheimer's disease should be especially highlighted insofar as it represents 70% of cases of dementia;
2. RECOGNISES the need to better understand, detect, prevent and combat the basic mechanisms which trigger neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, by supporting research in this field, and to improve care services for people suffering from these diseases;
3. BELIEVES it is necessary in Europe to significantly strengthen cooperation and coordination of research efforts, the level of financial investment in this area, and the degree of mobility of researchers, in order to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, now a major challenge for European societies;
4. TAKES NOTES of the various community initiatives which are already in existence and should be continued, such as the Joint Technology Initiative for innovative medicines (IMI), the Ambient Assisted Living joint research and development programme, ERA-NET "NEURON" and ERA-NET "ERA-AGE", both already having 12 participating Member States, the NeuroNE network of excellence and other projects on neuroscience funded under FP7, and ASKS the Commission to continue to provide up-to-date information on the scientific findings of these initiatives;

5. TAKES NOTE of the Commission communication on "Towards joint programming in research: Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively",<sup>3</sup>
6. ENCOURAGES strengthened rapprochement between relevant players, including networks of excellence, in order to create a real collaborative dynamic of all research stakeholders in Europe; EMPHASISES in particular the importance of combining the psychosocial approach to ageing with the results of medical and biomedical research;
7. RECOGNISES the relevance of the knowledge triangle - higher education, research, innovation - in the context of the fight against neurodegenerative diseases, notably by facilitating and ensuring transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and geographical mobility;
8. ENCOURAGES the preparation of research activities that can be implemented rapidly in order to create the conditions enabling the launch in Europe of a large-scale endeavour to understand, detect, prevent and combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's; CONSIDERS, in this regard, that it is necessary to establish as soon as possible national R&D strategies for preventive action designed to delay the age of onset of neurodegenerative diseases and that the coordinated mobilisation of the largest possible number of Member States is necessary in order to have sufficient approaches and resources to provide answers to these complex diseases;
9. EMPHASISES the need to incorporate the work undertaken in a long-term vision and to take into account disease in its entirety;

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<sup>3</sup> 11935/08.

10. RECOMMENDS the launching of a European initiative bringing together Member States, the Commission and other stakeholders with a view not only to mobilising and maintaining available researchers in Europe but also to training sufficient numbers of new specialists in order to reduce neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's;
  
11. RECOGNISES that R & D activities relating to Alzheimer's constitute a good example for testing innovative ways of pooling national expertise and resources on a voluntary basis as part of joint Europe-wide goals; in this regard, INVITES Member States and the Commission to:
  - create a forum bringing together key players in European research, aiming to understand better the basic mechanisms of Alzheimer's and find treatments to combat it;
  - take into account any existing national plans in this area;
  - explore proposals for a commitment by Member States to establish closer and stronger collaboration in this respect, *inter alia* by mobilising appropriate FP7 instruments.
  
12. INVITES the Commission to look into possible forms of consultation and cooperation on this subject with scientifically-advanced groupings at international level.

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