

E-4347/09EN

Answer given by Ms Vassiliou
on behalf of the Commission
(1.10.2009)

As the Commission has indicated in its replies to written questions E 4898/08 by Mr Kilroy-Silk, E 6262/08 by Mr Popa and E-3734/09 by Mr Higgins¹, the nature of the two disorders, Fibromyalgia and the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), have been, during years, controversially discussed. This situation had given rise to major differences of opinion concerning the ability of fibromyalgia and CFS patients to work, and to their entitlement to social security benefits. In such context of scientific controversy, it was difficult for the Commission to promote actions related to these diseases. Nowadays it appears as an established and accepted fact that these syndromes are genuine, severe and incapacitating disorders, even if controversies remain, and even if there are still discussions in relation to their most appropriate terminology and classification.

Consequently, the current version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) includes Fibromyalgia (Code M79.7) and there is no reason for refusal of treatment in any Member State on the basis of a supposed non existence of the disease as in the past.

The Health Strategy² adopted by the Commission privileges a "health determinants approach" permitting to cover the prevention of non genetic risk factors (e.g. obesity, physical activity, patterns of consumption, social status, smoking, etc.) associated to a maximum number of diseases, and a 'health information approach' permitting to evaluate the incidence and outcome of diseases and the development of best practices on therapeutic strategies, health economy aspects and research. In this context the Commission is not in favour of singular approaches for every separate disease or pathology.

From this point of view, the Commission Decision³ adopting the work plans for the implementation of the Public Health Programme has established a priority for work on information and definition of indicators on neurodegenerative, neurodevelopment and non-psychiatric brain diseases in relation to their prevalence, treatments, risk factors, risk reduction strategies, best practices, cost of illness and social support, with specific mention to chronic pain and CFS and fibromyalgia. A similar approach is also feasible from the side of the needs of health information for the musculoskeletal conditions.

In 2008, the Commission selected for funding a project European Musculoskeletal Conditions Surveillance and Information Network coordinated by the Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust in the United Kingdom that might contribute significantly to promote better understanding, knowledge and information on musculoskeletal conditions in the EU including on fibromyalgia.

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/QP-WEB/home.jsp>

² COM(2007) 630 final from 23.10.2007 "WHITE PAPER, Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013"

³ Commission Decision 2007/102/EC of 12 February 2007 adopting the work plan for 2007 for implementation of the programme of Community action in the field of public health (2003-2008), including the annual work programme for grants, OJ L 46, 16.2.2007.

