

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1005/10
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to the Commission

Subject: Reorganisation plan of the pharmaceutical group Sanofi-Aventis

Sanofi-Aventis, the largest European pharmaceutical group and the fourth largest worldwide, has launched a vast reorganisation plan, with the aim of saving EUR 2 billion by 2013. At the same time, in 2009, its turnover was EUR 29.3 billion, with a net profit of EUR 8.47 billion.

The business is therefore making large profits, and the decision to drastically reduce its workforce by cutting 1 300 jobs (20% of its French workforce) does not seem to be economically justified, but motivated rather by a predominantly accounting-based and financial approach of which the employees are the main victims. This reorganisation would also lead to several establishments being closed or sold, several lines of medical research being axed and several activities being grouped into scientific platforms.

Furthermore, at European level, this reorganisation has already affected several countries in 2009 and will continue to do so in 2010. 'Solutions' are being sought for some establishments in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. A plan to cut 10% of the German research and development workforce is already being discussed.

One of the worrying aspects of the reorganisation is that research and development activities are being outsourced, and may be relocated to low-cost developing countries. In a difficult economic context, this changes research and development structures profoundly and suddenly, leading to great concern about the effects on employment and the very existence of many establishments in France and Europe.

This raises the issues of the quality of European pharmaceutical research and of the future of this industry, which has a long history on the continent, and which contributes to the health of Europeans, to economic growth, to the development of the knowledge-based economy, to providing jobs for European graduates and to keeping skilled jobs in European regions. In the international economic battle, Europe has partly invested in these highly skilled activities, which contribute to maintaining its place in the world of international industry and which Sanofi-Aventis' purely financial strategy could have a part in endangering. This disengagement also clearly raises the issue of the role which big industrial groups must play for employment and innovation.

Given the project's major political, economic and social implications, which will inevitably have a bearing on European industrial policy, will the Commission involve itself in this issue and make representation to Sanofi-Aventis' management? Does it agree that the scale of this reorganisation will lead to a considerable loss of the know-how and expertise of the company's employees? Will it state what measures it could take regarding this reorganisation and Sanofi-Aventis' European plans?