

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0098/06

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Jan Andersson and Karin Jöns, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
to the Commission

Subject: Reintegration of breast cancer patients into the job market and use of social funds for continued training of health professionals in the field of breast cancer

Given the Lisbon strategy, which aims for a women's employment quota of 60% by 2010 and the large number of breast cancer cases diagnosed annually in women in the European Union (275 000 as currently estimated on the basis of the cancer registry data of the International Agency for Research on Cancer), the reintegration of breast cancer survivors into the job market is an urgent priority. This is underlined by the fact that an increasing number of women are diagnosed with breast cancer in the prime years of gainful employment: 35% of new breast cancer cases are currently diagnosed in women younger than 55 years. 12% are even diagnosed in women under age 45. Studies show, however, that around one fifth of former cancer patients do not return to work.

1. Could the Commission provide reliable information on the proportion of breast cancer patients who give up gainful employment during illness and treatment, for example by ordering a study on this subject?
2. How does the Commission intend to make employers aware of the need for patients to have the opportunity to resume full- or part-time employment while undergoing treatment regimes as this can be essential to maintain personal finances and stabilise patients' psychological condition?
3. How does the Commission intend to encourage employers to reintegrate breast cancer patients into the job market when the treatment is finished, to restructure their workplaces and to offer flexible working schedules?
4. Does the Commission see the need for, and will it support development of, a charter to protect the chronically ill in the workplace?
5. Implementation of mammography screening according to European guidelines for optimal early detection and treatment requires special training of medical staff. Does the Commission intend, particularly in the new Member States and the applicant countries, to promote use of the EU social fund and the pre-accession fund for training?

Tabled: 18.09.2006

Forwarded: 20.09.2006

Deadline for reply: 27.09.2006