

## Conference conclusions

The conference “**Dementia in Europe: a challenge for our common future**” has taken place in Rome on 14 November 2014 as an event under the Italian Presidency of the European Union. The event has been jointly organised by the Ministry of Health of Italy and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Consumers.

The Italian Presidency has identified the following conclusions from the event:

### *The challenge*

Dementia is one of the major health challenges which the European Union and its Member States faces: Today, more than six million citizens live with dementia. Many more experience symptoms of mild cognitive impairment, which may develop into dementia at a later stage.

The ageing of the European population means that the number of people experiencing cognitive decline or living with dementia will increase rapidly over the next decades. Some estimations expect that the number of cases of dementia will double each twenty years.

This increase in the number of Europeans living with dementia because of demographic change will create immense challenges for health and social systems in EU-Member States.

### *Recent Developments*

Policymakers increasingly recognise the urgent need to address dementia as a priority issue. Member States have the primary responsibility to act. The fact that more than half of the Member States have in the meantime adopted or are developing strategies or national action plans on dementia reflects the level of priority which is today attached to dementia. Some Member States have also integrated dementia into national strategies on neurodegenerative disorders.

The “European Initiative on Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementias”, which the European Commission launched in 2009, provided a strategic framework for action at EU-level to support Member States in their activities. The implementation report, which the Commission published in October 2014, describes the measures which the Commission has undertaken over the past five years in the context of this strategy.

These measures included, firstly, activities to promote the collaboration and coordination between Member States, such as through the Joint Action ALCOVE under the EU-Health Programme (2011-2013) or the Joint Programming Initiative Neurodegenerative Diseases (JPND) co-funded from the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme (2007-2013).

Secondly, dementia appears as a priority under several sectorial EU initiatives. Examples include the European Innovation Partnership Active and Healthy Ageing, launched in 2011, with its action strands on “prevention of cognitive decline” and on “building age-friendly environments”, EU-research policy, which provided more than Euros 355 million for research into dementia between 2007 and 2013, as well as the Flagship initiative “Human Brain Project”.

### *Continued cooperation on dementia at EU-level*

Building on the successful work over the past years, there is a continued need for the European Union to support Member States to exchange, to cooperate, to coordinate and to better address dementia through their own policies.

In order to deliver such opportunities for future cooperation between Member States, maintaining the Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia and the launch of a second Joint Action on Dementia will play key roles, together with an updated mapping of the situation in the EU, policies in place and the offer of services.

### *Principles and Objectives*

Such cooperation should support Member States, firstly, in developing their dementia policies and services in ways to enable the highest possible quality of life to people being diagnosed with prodromal stages of dementia or living with dementia. Secondly, it should support Member States in their actions to provide support to informal carers and forms of non-institutionalised care. Thirdly, the cooperation should support Member States in improving their dementia policies and systems in ways that protect the sustainability of public budgets.

The principles on which these objectives are built can be listed as follows:

People diagnosed or living with dementia and their family members should be involved in all steps of work on dementia across planning, implementation and evaluation.

Addressing the dementia-challenge requires coordinated contributions from a range of actors at various levels and from various policies and sectors.

All actions on dementia should be evidence-based. Per definition, good practices need to include clear evidence of their outcomes and should ideally have been subject of an evaluation, based on shared criteria.

Work on dementia will be strengthened if it takes into consideration the emerging international activities such as those initiated by the WHO, OECD and the G7-initiative “Global Action Against Dementia”.

The following priorities have been discussed:

1. Need to augment knowledge about dementia prevention measures and to support their implementation
2. Improvement of timely diagnosis and care, including use of eHealth;
3. Support to informal carers and developing the skills of professional carers;
4. Building dementia-friendly environments;
5. Improving the availability of data on dementia, developing indicators, nationally based and internationally comparable, in order to increase our understanding of dementia.

### *Further steps and action ahead in cooperation on dementia at EU-level*

In the light of the above principles, priorities and international activities, Member States are invited to continue addressing dementia as a core issue in their policies, to share information about their activities and to identify priorities for further dementia initiatives at EU-level.

At the same time, the European Commission is invited to consider changing the status of the Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia into a formal EU-Expert Group, which could serve as the first forum for the exchange, cooperation and coordination between EU-Member States. The Group activities could include the development of a common statement on dementia and on key elements

of dementia strategies by Member States and the European Commission.

Both the European Commission and Member States are invited to bring forward the second Joint Action on Dementia, which is to be launched in 2015. This Joint Action should promote the exchange of good practices, develop recommendations for common action and encourage this. It should be built on agreed good practice criteria and, where possible and relevant, on agreed indicators.

Finally, the future Presidencies of the EU are invited to consider the integration of activities on dementia and to review the progress made in EU-activities in this field as part of their Presidency programmes. A common document with results from the activities undertaken and with suggestions for perspective work could be presented by Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg at the end of the Trio Presidency period, in December 2015.