



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Assemblée nationale for its Opinion on Lyme disease.

The Commission welcomes the detailed observations and suggestions made by the Assemblée nationale on this important topic. Lyme disease is a tick-transmitted multisystem inflammatory disease that affects over 65,000 patients annually in Europe. In Europe, the annual number of Lyme disease cases is increasing in some areas, and tick vectors are expanding their range, to higher altitudes and latitudes, suggesting that Lyme disease will remain an important health concern in the coming decades. Recent data indicate that cases of persisting post tick-bite syndromes are probably due to multiple pathogens.

Lyme disease remains difficult to diagnose even for the best informed clinicians as no generally-agreed guidelines for diagnosis have so far been established. Reliable testing is essential to distinguish Lyme disease from many other disorders. Proper research is important to ensure the most appropriate diagnose to allow the specific therapeutic approach.

There is currently no vaccine available on the European market. Although a vaccine was developed and authorised in 1998, it was withdrawn from the market in 2002 for economic reasons, as well as doubts as to its long-term efficacy. However, vaccine research continues.

The Commission has supported nine projects related to Lyme disease with EUR 15.6 million under the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technical development. In addition, the Commission is committed to identify further funding opportunities for Lyme disease related projects under the upcoming new Framework Programme Horizon 2020 (2014-2020).

Regarding health policies, the Commission would like to recall that the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care is a Member States' competence (Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

Under Decision 1082/2013/EU on serious cross-border threats to health, the Commission is working with the Member States' Health Security Committee, the World Health Organization

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and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and coordinating public health measures by the Member States to combat serious cross-border threats to health.

Given the challenges related to Lyme disease, the Commission intends to follow this important issue and ask ECDC for an additional expert consultation on Lyme disease. On the basis of the results of this consultation the Commission will consider further action within its area of competences, to improve preparedness towards vector-borne diseases.

The Commission will also encourage the Member States to work on a harmonised case definition for Lyme borreliosis under Decision 102/2013/EU and to add the disease to Annex I of the Commission Decision 2000/96/EC on communicable diseases to be covered by surveillance and control in the Community network established under Decision 2119/98/EC, in order to strengthen efforts to further coordinate activities to counter this emerging disease.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Assemblée nationale and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Vytenis Andriukaitis
Member of the Commission*