

EMBARGO: 13 November 2008, 14.00 hrs

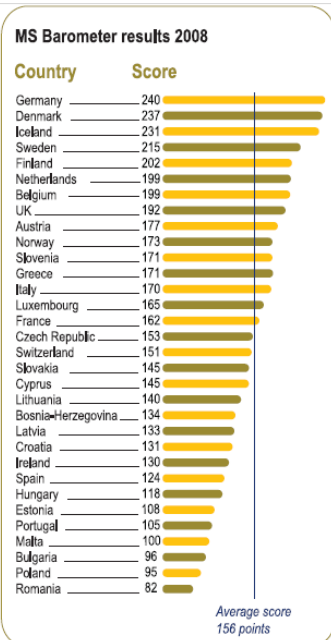
Brussels, 13 November 2008

Multiple Sclerosis barometer reveals the good and the bad across Europe and calls for a major policy rethink on MS

New figures released today in Brussels show that European citizens with Multiple Sclerosis face vast inequalities when it comes to treatment and support. Cross-border differences between patients receiving disease-modifying drugs (DMDs) are as high as 88%, with out-patient rehabilitation figures in some countries coming in at 98%, compared with a meagre 7% at the bottom.

The “MS barometer” charts the situation faced by people with MS across Europe in 7¹ key areas. It was released today at a meeting in the European Parliament where high level representatives from the Commission and national governments, leading neurologists and people with multiple sclerosis met for the second annual Multiple Sclerosis Information Dividend (MS-ID) Conference.

EMSP President Dorothea Pitschnau-Michel said: “The MS barometer results will be a significant step in persuading national governments to change their policies. Too many Europeans with MS are being denied the treatment and supports they need, when they need it”.



The annual benchmarking study allocates scores awarding recognition for the effectiveness of policies in place. With a maximum scoring of 270, and an average of only 155, 32 countries are represented on the overall scores chart. Examples of stark disparities include:

- ▶ Only 5 of the 32 countries show more than 50% of Persons with MS receiving disease-modifying drugs (DMDs).
- ▶ Out-patient rehabilitation figures show an alarming gap with the top countries at 98% while neighbouring countries come in at 7%.
- ▶ Only 8 of the 32 countries have adequate pensions/benefits systems in place for people with MS.

Demonstrating the disparities in the way that MS is managed across Europe and allowing the entire European MS Platform (EMSP) membership to identify where improvements need to be made, is a powerful invitation to national governments to step up their national policies.

¹ Access to treatment and therapies; Research; Employment; Empowerment of people with MS; Reimbursement of costs related to MS; Data collection; and Medication on the market.

EU officials stress the need to address such inequities at the EU level, and the European MS barometer is the first step to achieving that.

The barometer, an innovative transnational collection of data, was developed following a European Parliament Resolution on the rights and quality of life of patients with MS which led to a code of good conduct and the creation of the European funded project Multiple Sclerosis Information Dividend (MS-ID).

Information on the conference and MS barometer can be found here:

<http://www.ms-in-europe.org/news/>

www.ms-id.org/barometer2008

For further information please contact
Christoph Thalheim, Secretary General EMSP

Additional Notes

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a complex, chronic, disabling disease. It affects twice as many women as men, and is usually first diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40, at a critical stage in adult life with often considerable family and work responsibilities. To date, no cure exists. There are currently over 500,000 people diagnosed with MS in Europe.

EMSP represents their interests at the European level, working with more than 30 national associations to achieve its goals of high quality equitable treatment and support for Europeans with MS.