



Mariya GABRIEL

*Commissioner for Innovation, Research,
Culture, Education and Youth*

*Brussels, 12/11/2020
rtd.e.2(2020)5935254*

*Subject: Your letter addressed to Commissioners Kyriakides and Gabriel dated
9 September 2020*

Dear Mr Cañas Pérez,

We would like to thank you for your letter of 9 September 2020, where you share your concern and disappointment regarding our answer to your parliamentary question on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (E-003764/2020 and highlight the Resolution 2020/2580(RSP) adopted by the European Parliament on 18 June 2020.

We would like to reassure you that the Commission is aware of the impact that Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) has on patients and their families. Our services have been following this issue closely and have identified a gap that exists in terms of funding allocation between diseases such as ME/CFS and more prominent health conditions or rare diseases, which have dedicated funding.

However, the Commission also recognises that, regrettably, there are a large number of diseases that suffer the same situation, such as Lyme disease, chronic back pain, Down syndrome, migraine, to name a few. These conditions clearly represent unmet public health needs, whose research arms are not robust enough to compete efficiently with other strongly structured and organised medical fields. As already mentioned, the Commission has identified this gap and wishes to address it in the future Horizon Europe programme.

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We would also like to reassure you that the European Parliament resolution, which was adopted in June, is being taken into consideration for future research priorities. In this respect, the Commission is currently working closely with the Member States, which are responsible for at least 90% of the public health research investments made in the European Union. Furthermore, we would like to remind that the EU recently funded a Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action, called Euromene, to create an integrated network of researchers working on ME/CFS. We trust that the work carried out by the network will contribute to prepare and support the ME/CFS research community to pursue all the possibilities of funding that will arise within Horizon Europe.

In your letter, you also refer to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable people. The Commission is very aware of this and shares your concern. A dedicated space on the Health Policy Platform has been created for stakeholder organisations to come together and exchange practice and knowledge as regards the mental health impact of COVID-19. The group includes a focus on the needs of vulnerable groups such as people with pre-existing physical and mental ill health conditions. Over 60 participants have already joined this new network, including representatives from various patient organisations. The ME/CFS patient community has not yet joined the network but they are very welcome to do so, not only to share their insights but also to benefit from the experience shared and generated via the network.

Finally, we would like to thank you for the EP resolution, which further enables the Commission to address the unmet public health needs of the European citizens. The Commission is more efficacious and impactful with the support of the European Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mariya Gabriel', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mariya Gabriel