

**“My stroke was one of those which happened during the night. I was already paralyzed when I tried, early next morning, to leave the bed.”**

- Manuela Messmer Wullen, Stroke Survivor

## CAN YOU IMAGINE...?

**One day**, being a successful business woman, travelling internationally and responsible for a department of 300 staff – juggling this pressurised work life with two young children at home, and a busy social schedule.

**The next**, facing a 6 week stay in intensive care, 3 months of hospital care, 5 months of rehabilitation hospital, 7 years of ongoing rehabilitation; in total over 12 years to return to an acceptably stable situation.

**2 years into my long recovery, I made a disastrous attempt to return to work...**



I could not remember what to do, I was not able to recognise the people speaking to me on the phone; my memory and concentration did not exist, my foreign languages had been completely lost. I was in constant pain and always fatigued. I had no self-confidence, always questioning: where have my skills from before gone?

I decided there was no option but to leave the company and so informed my boss. What a horror for my ego! I felt **deeply depressed, furious, anxious, ashamed, isolated** and **totally useless!**

However, in a great example of social responsibility, my boss said to me:

‘Stay with us, I trust you, I will support the rebuilding of your self-confidence. You are such a brave woman. Come back to your office, whenever you want, if only for one or two hours a day. We will set up together a new team working for you. They will learn to do your job and this will also help you to find a way back to reality.’ What a challenge and such a great offer!

Unfortunately – most of those affected by a neurological disorder – such as stroke – are not as lucky to work for such a sympathetic employer and colleagues. Many are forced to leave work during the most productive years of life. A huge loss for them; but also for companies across Europe.

Remember, Manuela’s story could be your story. As many as 1 in 3 of us will be affected by a brain disorder during our lifetime (neurological or psychiatric). These are often chronic, long-term disorders – increasing in prevalence as the population ages. So, we need to act now to ensure that systems are in place to reduce the growing socio-economic impact.

Already, brain disorders cost the European economy over 800 billion euros annually! Much of this cost can be attributed to the loss of employment and associated social welfare costs incurred to support these patients and their carers. By keeping these people at work longer, we can reduce the economic impact – but also improve the quality of life of those affected.

**Remember, Manuela’s story could be your story.**

**As many as 1 in 3 of us will be affected by a brain disorder during our lifetime.**

**HELP TO US #MAKEWORKWORK BY ENABLING ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS AND CHRONIC PAIN CONDITIONS.**

**Sign Written Declaration no. 0112/2016**

## WRITTEN DECLARATION NO. 0112/2016, UNDER RULE 136 OF PARLIAMENT'S RULES OF PROCEDURE, ON ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS AND CHRONIC PAIN CONDITIONS<sup>1</sup>

1. Brain disorders and chronic pain conditions are two of the leading causes of long-term sick leave, and are growing in their impact as Europe's workforce ages.
2. Best practices for the retention and reintegration of people with chronic conditions are widespread.
3. Integrating people with chronic conditions such as these into employment is socio economically beneficial.
4. The Commission is called upon to use the EU Semester's country-specific recommendations to encourage Member States to implement cost-effective retention, reintegration and rehabilitation actions.
5. The Commission (DG SANTE, DG EMPL, DG REGIO and DG ECFIN) is called upon to collaborate on consolidating and consistently implementing EU legislation that will ensure equal access to employment for those affected by neurological disorders and chronic pain conditions.
6. The Commission is called upon, in close cooperation with the Member States, to work, together with their social partners, to clarify patients' rights, highlight successful workplace adjustments and reintegration actions – e.g. flexible working hours – and promote the use of the European Social Fund for such actions.
7. The Commission and Council are called upon to encourage the Member States to acknowledge that accurate early diagnosis and appropriate treatment and management are necessary to enable employees affected by these chronic conditions to enjoy equitable employment opportunities.
8. This declaration, together with the names of the signatories, is forwarded to the Council and the Commission.

1. Under Rule 136(4) and (5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, where a declaration is signed by a majority of Parliament's component Members, it is published in the minutes with the names of its signatories and forwarded to the addressees, without however binding Parliament.

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