

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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## COMMUNITY ACTION AGAINST AIDS IN 1987

(Communication from the Commission)

## REPORT ON COMMUNITY ACTION AGAINST AIDS IN 1987

As at 31 December 1987, 9 328 cases of AIDS had been officially reported in the European Community. This represents a 126% increase (8 227 new cases) since December 1986. These figures show, once more, that it is necessary to pursue the fight against AIDS at both national and Community level.

This report has been drafted at the request of the Council of Ministers for Health for its meeting scheduled to be held on 31 May 1988. It is a brief review of the activities carried out by the Community in 1987 on the AIDS front, in the fields of prevention, research and cooperation with ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

### I. COMMUNITY ACTION IN THE FIELD OF PREVENTION

In its communication on the fight against AIDS on 11 February 1987 (COM(87)83 final), the Commission stressed the need for Community action in the following areas:

- (a) exchange of experience concerning prevention, particularly in the field of information and health education;
- (b) joint examination of the possible relevance of certain measures relating, in one way or another, to migration policy, freedom of movement of persons, freedom of establishment and equal access to employment.

To ensure that such action meets with success the Commission proposed the setting up, at Community level, of a flexible coordination and information dissemination system concerning national practices in these fields. However, work was held up by:

1. the absence of a specific budget made available for AIDS prevention, as well as the paucity of Community budget appropriations for public health, which have prevented the commitment of funds necessary for the preliminary stage;
2. the inability of the European Parliament to examine the proposals put forward in the abovementioned communication during 1987;
3. the decision, taken on 18 May 1987 by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, to set up an *ad hoc* Working Party of officials responsible for public health in the Member States, to formulate a joint strategy concerning an action and coordination programme applicable at national

and Community level. The Working Party has also been instructed to formulate a procedure making possible a exchange of epidemiological data concerning research initiatives as well as technical, administrative and legal measures which are under consideration or have been adopted by the Member States. Since the ad hoc Working Party's brief overlapped, at least partially, with the areas of action proposed in its communication, the Commission elected to avoid any duplication of work and await the first concrete results produced by the Working Party.

So far these have consisted of a list of epidemiological data, administrative measures and actions which will be periodically exchanged for dissemination at Community level. For its part, the Commission proposes the setting up of simple and fast system of exchange of information on the public and private measures adopted or envisaged in the Member states.

In this respect, the European Parliament requested the Commission in 1987 to examine several measures taken at national level, for example in the field of systematic screening in the context of health checks at frontiers. On that occasion the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of freedom of movement, and stressed the need to prevent contradictory national practices developing. Its position is consistent with the stance it took on the occasion of the Council of Ministers for Health of 18 May 1987, and indeed with the conclusions arrived by that same Council.

In a wider context, the Commission took part in the work of the Select Committee of AIDS experts of the Council of Europe which enabled the Ministers for Health to adopt Recommendation No 5(87)25 concerning a European public health policy in the fight against AIDS. Considerable efforts have also been made to improve cooperation with the WHO, resulting in a reciprocal exchange of information.

## II. ACTION CONCERNING COMMUNITY RESEARCH ON AIDS IN 1987

### 1. Coordination of medical and health research

On 17 November 1987 the Council of Ministers adopted the fourth coordination programme in the field of medical and health research (1987-1991). The budget allocated to this programme is 65 million ECU with a tentative figure of 14 million ECU earmarked for AIDS research.

On the initiative of the European Parliament, preliminary activities were carried out in 1987, funded by a special budget allocation of 800 000 ECU and aimed at coordinating and promoting research which had already been planned or undertaken at national level. A number of European workshops

and regular meetings of the Community Working Party on AIDS research, which was set up in 1983, have thus been held. Furthermore, a first batch of research contracts have been agreed in the following areas:

- (a) epidemiological studies concerning, in particular, the gathering of statistical data within the Community, heterosexual transmission, perinatal infection, mathematical modelling and assessment of prevention strategies;
- (b) viro-immunological research, particularly in the field of concerted actions to develop new antiviral substances, vaccines and serological tests;
- (c) clinical research, particularly in the field of opportunistic infections.

## 2. Science and Technology for Development - "Medicine, health and nutrition in tropical and sub-tropical areas" subprogramme

In the context of the second "Science and Technology for development" programme and more specifically of the subprogramme on medicine, health and nutrition in tropical and sub-tropical areas (1987-1991), the scope of epidemiological research has been extended to the virological, immunological and clinical aspects of AIDS in the developing countries.

An initial series of research projects for an amount of 1,5 millions ECUS, was selected in 1987 and will be carried out early in 1988. Such projects cover, for instance, HIV-2 infection, interaction between AIDS virus and tuberculosis, tumours associated with AIDS, immunogenetics of certain proteins of the AIDS virus and the effect of AIDS on pregnancy.

3. The full list of these research programmes is available from the Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General "Science, Research and Development".

## III. EEC/ACP COUNTRIES PROGRAMME TO COMBAT AIDS

The objective of this Community programme is to assist ACP countries in implementing measures against AIDS within the context of their national health services. To this end, and in cooperation with the country concerned, it endeavours to identify the key aspects of the national programme and to provide the technical and financial aid needed for its implementation.

To this end, a memorandum listing the main points of the programme put forward by the Commission was sent to all ACP countries at the end of March 1987. Positive responses were received from 82 countries and by early 1988 about 30 financing agreements had already been signed.

Virtually all ACP countries are taking part in the WHO Special AIDS Programme and many have a medium-term national programme (3 to 8 years) drawn up in conjunction with the WHO. The EEC/ACP countries' programme has been integrated in the planning process coordinated by the WHO.

1. Implementation of the EEC/ACP countries' programme by the Commission in 1987

Suitable projects have already been identified and assessed in several countries and similar work is underway in the rest.

In 1987, financial support totalling 900 000 ECU was granted under the EEC/ACP countries' programme to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi in the form of emergency aid or cofinancing of non-governmental organizations engaged in the fight against AIDS.

Furthermore, financial support totalling some 3 800 000 ECU was approved for Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zaire and Senegal. In the field of monitoring of blood transfusions, the setting up of reference laboratories and the strengthening of the programmes to fight sexually transmitted diseases have gotten the priority (3 500 000 ECUS).

Lastly, agreements were concluded with the authorities responsible for the fight against AIDS in ACP countries on several projects. The countries concerned include Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, Tanzania, Suriname, Malawi, Jamaica, Guyana, Guinea-Bissau, Grenada, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Chad, Papua New Guinea, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Botswana, Benin, Djibouti, Mauretania, Somalia, Zambia, Mozambique, and Guinea.

Projects to be sponsored cover improved HIV virus screening in blood transfusions, development of national programmes for the fight against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, support for initiatives in the field of health education and information of the public, and improvement of national AIDS monitoring programmes.

A detailed list of these projects is available from the Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General of Development, Sectorial Policy Division, Task Force AIDS.

2. Coordination between the EEC/ACP countries AIDS programme, the WHO Special Programme and the Member States

The guidelines for cooperation with the WHO were approved in May 1987. They include:

- joint missions at the planning stage;

- coordination in those countries where the Community decides to contribute to the funding of a national medium-term plan;
- Community participation in the overall assessment of national programmes.

Coordination with the Member States is ensured by contacts between the Member States and the Commission which take place every six months, or more frequently if necessary. An initial coordination meeting was held in November 1987.

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On balance, 1987 saw the start of Community action in the fight against AIDS. The current year should see the expansion and development of the action already undertaken.