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Press Release

Breaking down the barriers:
A European Employment Pact for people with
multiple sclerosis and other neurodegenerative diseases

The **European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)** launched a cross-border ‘call to action’ aimed at businesses interested in supporting and benefiting from sustainable employment for people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) or other neurodegenerative diseases in Europe.

This call comes in the form of a *European Employment Pact* which was presented before EMSP members and partners, and EU decision-makers at an event organised in the European Parliament in Brussels, on 24 March, and hosted by **MEP Rosa Estaras-Ferragut**.

The event was titled “*Breaking down the barriers: Access to employment and the economics of brain health*” and, according to Ms Estaras-Ferragut, it provided a broad perspective on the crucial role of employment in the lives of people with MS:

“We want to raise awareness of the challenges that people with neurodegenerative conditions and especially multiple sclerosis face in accessing work and staying in the workplace. This has an impact on Europe’s economy as a whole.”

While Europeans spend €15 billion every year on managing MS, 80% of people with MS have to leave work prematurely, between 35-55 years. The whole society is therefore handed a huge burden, but one which could be considerably reduced if people with MS were to receive better support in the workplace.

This is why the *European Employment Pact* will not only benefit people with multiple sclerosis, but also the employers who will get involved, says **EMSP Project Coordinator Emma Rogan**:

“Added to the thousands of people with MS currently in work, there are thousands of other people who will be diagnosed with MS or similar conditions in the future. The Pact is a way to equip and prepare business for this reality by enabling them to focus on people's abilities and, while doing so, to dismantle the barriers to employment.”

Did you know?

...that integrating a person with MS into the workplace doesn’t necessarily mean implementing costly adjustments. Often, all people with MS need are an extra 30 minutes to rest or having their desk placed fairly close to the restroom, as most experience “invisible” symptoms such as fatigue and bladder problems.

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...that most young people with MS who are able to want to work - 65% according to a recent EMSP. But despite being guaranteed the right to do so by national and international legal frameworks, they encounter difficulties in getting or keeping a job due to the bad mythology surrounding their health condition.

Pressure on carers

There are at least 9 million people living with neurodegenerative diseases in Europe. From this total, multiple sclerosis (MS) affects more than 700,000 people.

Disabled people with MS are usually cared for by friends or members of their families. The carer community, often unaccounted for by public policies, brings the total number affected by MS in Europe to approximately 1,5 million people.

Paving the Path to Participation

The *European Employment Pact* has been developed in the framework of the *Paving the Path to Participation* project, which has received co-funding from the European Commission under the DG Justice PROGRESS programme. It reflects only the authors' view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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