

Dr. med. Ursula von der Leyen

President, European Commission
Berlaymont, Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Bruxelles/Brussels

Luxembourg, 20 July 2026

Dear President von der Leyen,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing on behalf of the more than 9 million Europeans living with dementia and the family carers who support them, to ask that you **propose a European Neurological Health Plan in your State of the European Union address in September**, with dementia as a distinct priority within it.

Neurological conditions currently affect over 150 million people in Europe. Dementia is not the most prevalent neurological disease, but it is among the most consequential. It is the third leading cause of death in the European region and one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people. The European population aged 65 and over is rapidly expanding, and on current projections, 14.3 million people in the EU27 will be living with dementia by 2050¹.

The economic burden is of a matching scale. The overall cost of neurological diseases in Europe is estimated at around EUR1.5 trillion per year² – a figure that dwarfs what is proposed for spending on competitiveness overall in the next MFF.

In addition, it is already clear that this category of diseases does not and will not affect all Europeans on an equal basis. For one, there are significant gender dimensions, with women disproportionately affected both as patients and unpaid caregivers. As such, taking action on neurological disease is not only essential from a public health perspective but is imperative in advancing gender equality, as laid down in the Commission's Roadmap for Women's Rights and the Gender Equality Strategy (2026-2030) and the European Care Strategy.

From the economic, public health and societal perspective, there is a clear impetus to act. Commissioner Várhelyi's **message** to the MindShift initiative in Rome this June was most welcome. Your Commission's decisive and bold action in proposing the European Beating Cancer Plan and the Safe Hearts Plan has shown how the European Union can lead the way on the most pressing health issues facing the continent.

As such, it is our fervent belief that a European Neurological Health Plan is essential and would underscore your commitment to protecting the health of EU citizens. It would tackle not only significant health challenges that Europeans are living with on a daily basis, but also those that will increasingly affect our ageing societies for many decades to come.

Cross-institutional support for such a plan is growing. The European Parliament's Own-Initiative Report (INI) on a Neurological Health Strategy is due to be finalised early next year, and your party, the European People's Party, committed to a European Plan to address Alzheimer's disease, dementia and Parkinson's disease in its 2024 Manifesto. The Commission is now in a position to fulfil that commitment, meeting the expectations of Europeans across the continent who are living with a neurological disorder.

¹ Alzheimer Europe. The prevalence of dementia in Europe 2025. <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/resources/publications/prevalence-dementia-europe-2025>.

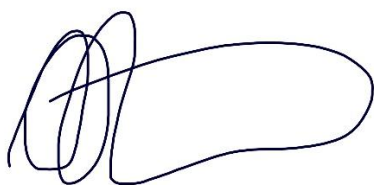
² Boon PAJM, Berger T, et al. (2024). A roadmap towards promoting and improving brain health in Europe and closing the awareness and funding gap. *European Journal of Neurology*, 32:e16589.

As such, we ask you to carefully consider announcing **the inclusion of a European Neurological Health Plan in your State of the European Union 2026, and in the Commission's 2027 Work Programme.**

We remain available to support and advise your team, and that of Commissioner Várhelyi, in the weeks and months ahead as such a Plan develops and progresses.

We thank you for your consideration and would be glad to provide any further information that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, representing Angela Bradshaw.

Angela Bradshaw, PhD
Deputy Executive Director
Alzheimer Europe