



To

Ekaterina Zaharieva

**Commissioner for Startups, Research and
Innovation**

Brussels, June 2026

Funding for research on ME/CFS

Dear Commissioner Zaharieva,

Approximately two million European citizens suffer from the disabling disease myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). A quarter of ME/CFS patients are homebound, and the economic costs of the illness were estimated to be 0.7% of GDP annually in Germany.¹

Because the pathology is poorly understood and the majority of ME/CFS patients are female, the illness has historically been stigmatized and neglected. Scientific research into the condition is severely underfunded compared to its disease burden.² Together with other post-infectious diseases such as Long Covid, ME/CFS has been called one of the greatest health policy challenges of the twenty-first century.³

The Horizon Europe call on “Tackling high-burden for patients and under-researched medical conditions” has offered funding opportunities for ME/CFS research but was underfunded. The call had a success rate of only six percent, and multiple high-quality proposals from international consortia were rejected.

¹ Daniell J, Brand J, Paessler D, Heydecke J, Schoening S, Nikoloudis ML, Manser V, McLennan AK. 2026. The rising cost of Long COVID and ME/CFS in Germany: 2026 update. April 2026. Hamburg and Karlsruhe: ME/CFS Research Foundation and Risklayer

² Bonuck K, Gao Q, Congdon S, Kim RS. Long COVID disability burden in US adults. Communications Medicine. 2026 Mar 31;6(1):177.

³ Die Zeit. Bundesregierung will Erforschung von ME/CFS stärker fördern. 14 November 2025.

We therefore urge the Commission to include this important topic in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework. Decades of neglect and underfunding can evidently not be overturned by one study but need a consistent and long-term research program.

Dedicated and structural support is needed to grow infrastructure and networks to progress research on post-infectious diseases such as ME/CFS.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Kind regards,

Pascal ARIMONT
Nora MEBAREK
Jutta PAULUS
Verena MERTENS
Wouter BEKE
Günther SIDL
Hannes HEIDE
Tiemo WÖLKEN
Liesbet SOMMEN
Andrea WECHSLER