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## PRESS RELEASE

### Greece is shielding itself against the new pandemic of neurodegenerative diseases

The State, the research and academic community, the patients' associations and the citizens joined forces against neurodegenerative diseases, at the National Precision Medicine Network for Neurodegenerative Diseases (EDIAN) event.

The event, which took place on March 31, 2022 at the Megaron Athens Concert Hall, demonstrated the strong need for necessary interventions so that the country can prepare and control, as much as possible, the neurodegenerative diseases, that tend to reach pandemic proportions. It should be noted that dementia alone affects more than one million citizens in Greece today - patients and caregivers -, while the annual cost for its treatment amounts to 3 billion euros.

At the EDIAN event, the representatives of the members of the Network presented their clinical, diagnostic and research activities concerning the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases (Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, Huntington's disease, Motor Neuron disease). Dozens of members of the research and academic ecosystem, students, health professionals, representatives of patient associations and citizens attended the event and were informed about EDIAN's actions. More specifically, during the two years of its operation, EDIAN has:

- Completed the medical protocols for recording neurodegenerative diseases and the protocols for creating a Neurodegenerative Disease BioBank
- Established the first Registry of Neurodegenerative Diseases and their precursors
- Recruited more than 800 patients
- Analyzed, biochemically and molecularly, more than 200 and 150 samples of patient-derived biological specimens, respectively.

Thus far, EDIAN's participants include: The Foundation for Research and Technology- Hellas, The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, The Hellenic Pasteur Institute, The Biomedical Research Foundation of the Academy of Athens, The Biomedical Sciences Research Center "Alexander Fleming", The University of Patras, The University of Crete and The University of Thessaly, with plans to expand in order to include other entities, hospital facilities, research laboratories and clinical doctors.

"Only through connection of the research and academic communities can we comprehend and treat such serious diseases and, therefore, improve the quality of life of those affected", was stressed by the Deputy Minister of Development and Investments, Dr. Christos Dimas, stating that "the goal of the state is the utilization of valuable knowledge which is produced within the framework of EDIAN for the benefit of society". According to the Secretary General for Research and Innovation, Professor Athanasios Kyriazis, the state invests in precision medicine and supports EDIAN as "new methods, new data and new results are valuable for both society and the economy."

The coordinator of EDIAN, President of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas and Professor at the Medical School of the University of Crete, Nektarios Tavernarakis, noted that "the active and diverse EDIAN also creates the opportunity for training of young scientists", expressing his belief that the Network "will function as a reference point in the coming years, leaving a positive imprint on society."

The co-coordinator of EDIAN, Professor of the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Leonidas Stefanis, underlined the need for "research activities to focus on early and precursor forms of disease, so as curation to become possible", while adding that "this synergy between neurology, biology and computer science, which, in fact, helps to reverse the brain drain, is an important legacy for the future".

#### A few words about EDIAN

EDIAN, an emblematic initiative of the Ministry of Development and Investments, under the supervision of the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation, makes the country a co-shaper of the medicine of the future for the benefit of society and public health. The Network started its operation in 2020 as a coordinated effort of the domestic research and academic ecosystem in order to address the health challenges of our times, namely the rapid increase of neurodegenerative diseases, with initial funding of € 2.2 million, coordinated by the President of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas and Professor at the Medical School of the University of Crete, Nektarios Tavernarakis and co-coordinated by Leonidas Stefanis, Professor of the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. With the available data, the contribution of EDIAN, through the exploitation of the research and the creation of valuable know-how and innovative infrastructures, is considered crucial and catalytic, with multiple benefits for both the patients and the National Health System. For each patient, early diagnosis and individualized treatment implies a more effective overall treatment of the disease and an improved quality of life. For the health system, the new possibilities for rational planning of the patients' treatment lead to economies of scale, reducing unnecessary costs.

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