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Action sought to help thalidomide survivors

Press release from EFA MEP Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru)

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** wants the EU to take action in support of survivors of thalidomide.

Jill Evans is part of a cross party initiative which is calling on the European Commission to ensure thalidomide survivors are properly compensated and provided for.



MEP Jill Evans

Jill co-sponsored an oral question to the European Commission in the European Parliament on the issue and has been supporting the Fifty Year Fight campaign group, which includes thalidomide survivors from Wales.

The drug thalidomide was used to treat morning sickness in the 1950s and 1960s. It was subsequently found to have severe side effects including birth defects.

Speaking in the debate in Strasbourg, Jill Evans MEP said:

"For many years now Thalidomide survivors' have had to campaign for justice: my constituents in Wales like those across the EU.

"As their health needs increase, we must do all we can to ensure that action is now taken - action which is long overdue.

"We know that the campaign goes on to ensure that all the facts come to light regarding the German

government's role in the premature ending of the 1970 trial: the only ever criminal trial relating to the whole Thalidomide scandal.

"Because the trial was ended, valuable evidence was suppressed and many Thalidomide survivors could not make claims for compensation to cover their lifelong needs as a result.

"While some survivors have received some support, others have received nothing. We want equality and justice for all the survivors in all countries. As their elected representatives, we want to ensure that their present and future care needs are met. We need to look at a European framework to achieve that. They have already waited over fifty years.

"It was believed that over 10,000 babies worldwide were affected by Thalidomide. More recent information suggests that the numbers were much, much higher than that.

"There is a wealth of evidence about the ongoing suffering and increasing health needs of the survivors - the few thousand in Europe today. Studies done in the UK and in Germany show how urgent these needs are.

"There has been strong cross-party support in this house for the campaign for justice - the fifty year fight. I believe that it is time for us act - to help put right a terrible wrong."

Ends

More information about Fifty Year Fight: www.fiftyyearfight.org

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Jill Evans

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