

**Question for written answer E-011832/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Designation of 2014 as the European Year of Mental Health and the Brain

Brain diseases and mental health problems affect more than a quarter of the European population, and pose a significant burden to society, as well as those affected. A recent report shows that in Europe the total annual cost of brain diseases and mental illness is EUR 798 billion. Mood disorders – including depression and bipolar disorder – represent the highest cost, estimated at just over EUR 113 billion, followed by dementia at EUR 105 billion. Given the fact that people live longer, the total cost is only likely to increase.

This poses considerable challenges, not only to health systems, society and the economy, but, more importantly, to those affected by brain diseases and mental illness and their carers and families. This is why we, as co-chairs of the European Parliament Interest Group, support the idea – as already stated in the recent Parliament report on Alzheimer's disease – of designating 2014 as the European Year of Mental Health and the Brain, with the ultimate aim of improving both neurological and mental health.

Such a year would have the potential to increase awareness of all brain diseases and mental health problems across the EU. It could underline the need for more research, stimulate efforts to educate, inform and advise all those affected and their carers, and help improve their quality of life. It could also stimulate the development and implementation of action plans at local, national, regional and European level and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practice.

Considering the above, can the Commission provide its views on the designation of 2014 as European Year of Mental Health and the Brain, and indicate whether a proposal is forthcoming on the matter?