

**Question for written answer E-004869/2018**  
**to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Mireille D'Ornano (EFDD)**

Subject:     Healthcare for spina bifida

Spina bifida is a serious foetal malformation which can arise during the first few months of pregnancy: the spinal column fails to close properly, and so its contents – in particular the spinal cord – are left exposed. If the condition is not managed from the very time of birth, and across disciplines (urological, neuropsychiatric, psychological...), it can have a very serious effect on the health of the children concerned, and may even lead to suicide in adolescence. The number of spina bifida cases is increasing to a worrying degree, but the causes of the condition have still not been identified.

- 1)     Does the Commission have comparative data on spina bifida incidence rates and the ways in which the condition is being dealt with in the different Member States?
- 2)     What research programmes is the EU supporting to identify the factors underlying the condition (so that, ultimately, an adapted prevention strategy can help to reduce incidence rates) and improve the medical techniques used to treat the illness?