

**Question for written answer P-004347/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Sari Essayah (PPE)

Subject: Spreading awareness of stem cell registers and recruitment of volunteer potential donors

Hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs) are the blood cells that give rise to all other blood cells: erythrocytes, leucocytes and platelets. Donated HSCs can be used to treat various serious blood diseases, such as leukaemia and aplastic anaemia. HSCs are most commonly harvested from donors by giving them growth factor injections, inducing HSCs to move from bone marrow into the bloodstream, from which they can be harvested by means of normal blood donation. Suitable donors for some 30% of patients who require HSCs can be found among their own relatives, but the majority of patients are dependent on anonymous donors who are entered in stem cell registers. It is possible to be entered in such a register if one meets the requisite health and age criteria. Most potential donors who are registered are never actually asked to donate stem cells. In Finland, for example, 22 000 people are registered, but only 20-40 people per annum donate cells. Worldwide, more than 20 million volunteers are registered.

In order for stem cell treatment to be a success, the most important thing is that the tissue type of the donor should match that of the patient. This requires as comprehensive as possible a register of potential donors, so that a donor with the right tissue type can be found for a patient requiring treatment, particularly if the patient has a rare type of tissue. A suitable HSC donor may also be sought from the international network of HSC registers, making it many times more likely that a matching donor can be found. There is a particular need to persuade more young men to register as donors, because, for biological reasons, men are selected as donors more often than women.

Registration as an HSC donor is voluntary. In order to encourage more volunteers to register, it is important to spread awareness of HSC registers and their importance.

What will the Commission do to increase at EU level the information that reaches people – especially young men – about HSC registers and their importance?

What could the Commission, for its part, do to encourage more people, particularly young men, to volunteer as potential donors and to have their particulars recorded in HSC registers in the Member States?