



9.11.2010

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

(0014/2010)

Question for Question Time in committee 0014/2010  
under Rule 197 of the Rules of Procedure  
by János Áder, Anja Weisgerber, Jim Higgins

Subject: Vitamin D Deficiency

Over the last few years the interaction between nutrition and health as a promising prevention opportunity in public health has become better understood. The prevention of poor nutrition and nutritional deficiency has also become a priority for the WHO as set out in the WHO Europe's Action Plan for food and nutrition policy 2007-2013. Vitamin D is widely recognised as an essential life nutrient and as a key preventive factor in bone and muscle health. A growing body of exciting new science also demonstrates that vitamin D plays a significant role in the prevention of other diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, multiple sclerosis, immune function and various forms of cancer. A recent study by Grant *et al* estimates that providing the European population with sufficient vitamin D would lower health costs by 187 billion Euros with only 10 billion Euros of additional costs. Nonetheless, according to a number of studies approximately 50% of the European population are vitamin D deficient.

In line with Article 168 TFEU public health action by the European Union shall complement national policies by the Member States. Prevention of diseases, as well as raising awareness on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and nutrition clearly fall within the EU's domain. Given that the Commission recognises the importance of vitamin D in disease prevention as well as its potential to save health care costs and bearing in mind that the current RDA for vitamin D as set out in Directive 90/496/EC is too low to fight widespread deficiency in all population groups in Europe, we would like to ask the Commission the following questions:

- Given the clear evidence regarding the potential health benefits of vitamin D, will the Commission engage in an awareness raising campaign on widespread vitamin D deficiency?

- What is the Commission planning to do – in terms of proposing recommendations or legislation – in order to assist Member States in tackling vitamin D deficiency in their public health and nutrition policies?

- Will the Commission be in a position to support a review on levels of vitamin D deficiency in the different Member States, on the one hand, and further research into the potential benefits of increased daily vitamin D intake for the European population on the other?