

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1745/03

by Toine Manders (ELDR) and Herman Vermeer (ELDR)
to the Commission

Subject: European Cycling Day

To promote recreation and physical exercise, a National Cycling Day is organised annually in the Netherlands by Dutch tourist offices (VTVs) and the Netherlands Tourist Board (Toerisme Recreatie Nederland) on the second Saturday in May. On 10 May of this year, some 22 000 people took part in the event.

Lack of physical exercise is one of the causes of obesity, which can be a factor in cardiovascular disease. This is a worrying situation, bearing in mind that the consequences of so-called Western diseases go beyond the implications for the health of European citizens. The high healthcare costs associated with such diseases stifle economic growth and prevent the higher labour market participation rates considered necessary to achieve further growth. These trends consequently have the potential to frustrate the Lisbon Process.

As well as encouraging people to take exercise, events of this kind also promote cycling as a mode of transport, helping to reduce car use, and therefore traffic congestion, including commuter traffic.

Finally, the event promotes tourism and recreation, which can also lead to the setting up of a transnational network of cycle paths and cycling routes.

Given that Commission policy views the fight against obesity, as well as transport and tourism/recreation, as being of paramount importance, it makes sense to investigate the prospects of creating a European equivalent of the Dutch National Cycling Day, and/or to initiate, encourage, and provide financial support for such an event.

1. Is the Commission aware of the above-mentioned National Cycling Day?
2. Is the Commission prepared to investigate the prospects of creating an annual European Cycling Day and linking it to the National Cycling Day in the Netherlands?
3. If these prospects prove positive, is the Commission prepared to encourage the organisation of such an event and, where appropriate, to provide financial support for it, so that the policy areas mentioned above can be further developed?