

**Question for written answer E-5542/2010
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Osteoporosis

In an ageing Europe, osteoporosis has become one of the most common, debilitating and costly chronic diseases. In the European Union, someone suffers from a fracture as a result of osteoporosis every eight seconds. The number of osteoporotic fractures is estimated at 3.79 million, of which 0.89 million were hip fractures. The total direct costs are estimated at €31.7 billion and are expected to increase to €76.7 billion in 2050.

Hip fractures are invariably associated with chronic pain, reduced mobility, increased disability and increasing dependence. Up to 24% of affected individuals die in the first year after a hip fracture. Loss of function and independence among survivors is profound, with 40% unable to walk independently, 60% requiring assistance, and 33% totally dependent or in a nursing home in the year following a hip fracture.

Although a prior fracture is associated with an 86% increased risk of further fracture, the great majority of individuals at high risk who have already had at least one osteoporotic fracture are neither identified nor treated. The treatment gap persists despite the availability of effective tests to diagnose osteoporosis and the existence of a range of cost-effective pharmacological interventions to reduce fracture risk. Measures such as healthy diet and physical activity throughout life also improve bone health.

Vertebral (spinal) fractures are the most common type of osteoporotic fractures, yet approximately two thirds remain undiagnosed and untreated by health care professionals. Identification of individuals at high risk and prevention of further fractures are key to reducing the burden of osteoporosis. In 1998, the Commission published a report with eight recommendations, stating that prevention of osteoporosis should be a major priority in the ongoing education and training of health care professionals. In 2008, experts from the International Osteoporosis Foundation observed that, although progress had been made to implement the Commission's recommendations, many aspects of osteoporosis management remained unsatisfactory. Only four Member States have fracture registries, while none exist at European level. In addition, only 12 Member States have sufficient diagnostic facilities, and only limited prevention programmes exist.

1. Does the Commission intend to support the creation of an EU osteoporotic fracture registry to ensure the collection of comparable and comprehensive data?
2. What steps are being taken to encourage Member States to promote preventive measures to maintain good bone health in all EU citizens?