Question for written answer E-002038/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
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Subject: Protecting the public against the adverse effects of light pollution

The 24-hour daily cycle of light and darkness forms the basis of natural functioning for all plants and animals, including humans. This circadian cycle allows organisms to anticipate and prepare for precise and regular environmental changes and is important for, among other things, regulating and coordinating internal metabolic processes.

There is growing evidence that exposure to light at night disrupts the natural circadian cycle in a manner that has adverse impacts on health. Medical research has indicated that exposure to light at night increases the incidence of certain types of cancer, most notably breast cancer. Furthermore, circadian disruption potentially contributes to obesity and diabetes. Studies have also suggested that excessive artificial light exposure early in life may contribute to an increased risk of depression and other mood disorders in humans.

Such studies include one on breast cancer by Stevens (PMID: 20336819), one on cancer in men by Kloog et al. (DOI: 10.1080/07420520802694020) and one on obesity by Reiter et al. (PMID: 21668294).

Based on such research findings, a number of calls have been made for action to address the problem. For example, the American Medical Association has called for further study into the health risks of environmental exposure to light at night.

What steps does the Commission intend to take to reduce the health risks posed by light pollution for EU citizens?