

**Question for written answer E-002341/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Gaston Franco (PPE)

Subject: Fatal cases of meningitis

The regional health body in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur reported the deaths on 21, 22 and 23 February 2014 in Nice of three young men all presenting symptoms associated with meningitis (meningococci B and C). Every year nearly 1.2 million people fall ill with meningitis worldwide. The mortality rate is 8 %. In Europe serogroup B is the most frequent cause of the illness, being responsible for at least half the total number of cases (between 3 406 and 4 819 of the 7 000 cases recorded each year between 2003 and 2007). Moreover, some countries are more affected than others, for instance Belgium, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

A vaccine against meningitis C which only needs to be administered once to be effective has been recommended since 2010 in France for children and adults between the ages of 1 and 24. Unfortunately, immunisation coverage is still not high enough: only 50 % of children between the ages of 1 and 4 are vaccinated and less than 5 % of people in the 20-24 age range. In a more recent development, on 14 January 2013 the vaccine Bexsero was licensed for use on the European market for 'active immunisation of individuals from 2 months of age and older against invasive meningococcal disease caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* group B'.

1. How is the Commission planning to improve coverage of immunisation against meningitis C in the European Union?
2. Following the recommendations made by the European Medicines Agency on 14 January 2013, could the Commission give details of use of the vaccine against meningitis B in Member States' national vaccination programmes?
3. Is notification of meningococcal disease compulsory in all EU Member States?
4. How does the Commission plan to improve prevention and early diagnosis of meningitis in the European Union, so as to reduce the number of 'avoidable' deaths?