Question for written answer E-003186/2014
to the Council
Rule 117
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Subject: Updating the Council Recommendation on seasonal flu vaccination to include children

In 2009, the European Council adopted a specific Recommendation on seasonal flu vaccination to combat the variable and often low rates of vaccination coverage that can be seen across Europe. The Recommendation focused on improving vaccination coverage amongst risk groups such as the elderly, people with certain medical conditions and healthcare workers, with a targeted vaccination rate of 75 %.

Since the 2009 Recommendation was issued, a number of organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have acknowledged the burden of the disease on children and extended the definition of a 'risk group' to include pregnant women and children under five. More recently, on 9 January 2014, the Commission published a working document on the implementation of the Council Recommendation of 22 December 2009 on seasonal flu vaccination (2009/1019/EU) which identifies children as a risk group for seasonal flu and acknowledges that influenza constitutes a significant burden on children as well as having an indirect impact on siblings and parents.

Moreover, on 22 October 2013 the Union adopted a Decision to improve preparedness activities across the EU and enhance its ability to coordinate a response in the event of a serious cross-border threat to health.

Despite growing awareness, children have not yet been included in the Council Recommendation. There is therefore a real need to re-examine the Recommendation with a view to including children, so as to improve the protection of European citizens and fight seasonal flu.

In the light of the foregoing, does the Council intend to update its Recommendation on seasonal flu vaccination so that it refers explicitly to children, in line with the position of the ECDC and the Commission's working document?