

**Question for written answer E-003502/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Aldo Patriciello (PPE)

Subject: World Down Syndrome Day

21 March is a crucial date because it is World Down Syndrome Day, organised each year by *Coordown*, Italy's umbrella body for organisations for people with Down Syndrome, which also promotes the international 'Dear Future Mom' campaign.

Down Syndrome, or Trisomy 21, identified by the physician John Langdon Down in 1866, is characterised by the presence of an additional chromosome (three instead of two) in the chromosome pair, attributable to meiotic non-disjunction (where the chromosomes fail to divide correctly, resulting in one extra gamete).

According to the World Health Organisation, 1 out of 200 newborn babies is at risk of being affected by a chromosomal abnormality, of which Down Syndrome is the most common. The risk to the unborn child depends on the age of the mother, rising from 1 in 1400 at the age of 22, to 1 in 625 at the age of 33 to 1 in 200 at the age of 40, with an average risk of 1 in 700. However, in view of the fact that around 2/3 of fetuses conceived with Down Syndrome are aborted, the potential risk is higher.

The average life expectancy of a person affected by Down Syndrome has increased considerably thanks to developments in medicine and better treatment, currently standing at 62 years. It is estimated that there are currently around 38 000 people affected by Down Syndrome, 61 % over the age of 25, currently living in Italy.

The proposed theme for this year's World Down Syndrome Day is well-being. For a person suffering from a disability, this can be achieved through social integration, ranging from the more obvious opportunity to go to school to finding a job and/or living alone and (why not?) with a loved one.

The aim is also to overcome existing prejudices and promote a new culture by raising public awareness. Undoubtedly diversity exists, but only where we ourselves create it.

Can the Commission tell us whether it is able to promote initiatives to heighten awareness in order to safeguard the rights of persons affected by Down Syndrome and identify ways of ensuring that the person affected, his/her mother and family are better informed?