

Question for written answer E-002029/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Preparing the European Union for overcoming possible future epidemics and pandemics

The Ebola virus, the swine flu A/H1N1 virus, and recently the Zika virus are examples of serious health hazards that are spreading fast across borders. Preparing the European Union and its Member States to be able to respond quickly as part of the global health safety system is one of the major challenges that we are facing today; especially at a time when terrorism is spreading, the possibility of a deliberate epidemic outbreak cannot be ruled out.

What raises concern, in particular, is that some highly contagious diseases might return; this risk might be increased by abandoning or limiting mass immunisation, a move called for by increasingly popular anti-vaccination movements. Another significant problem is the rising level of antibiotics resistance, which represents a considerable threat to our ability to treat infections. As I mentioned before, we must also take into account the growing risk of a terrorist attack using highly contagious genetically modified viruses or bacteria, particularly given that the bacillus anthrax has already been used before.

As such, it is extremely important to support the development of vaccinations, diagnostic methods and strategies for controlling the spread of highly contagious diseases. Taking into account their competences designed to contain the risk of an epidemic and pandemic outbreak posing a threat to the health and life of European citizens, what actions is the Commission taking in collaboration with Member States to prepare for epidemics and pandemics?