

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0023/03

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to the Council

Subject: EU aid and intervention for the victims of Chernobyl

The explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986 was the most serious nuclear accident ever to have occurred in peacetime, leaving a terrifying and devastating radioactive legacy that will continue to be felt for many centuries to come, mainly in the European states of Ukraine and, above all, Belarus, countries already fragile as a result of undergoing abrupt economic, social and political transition.

As well as the great many victims directly affected by radiation among the local inhabitants and the 600 000 'liquidators' who took part in the clean-up operation at the site of this tragedy of the industrial age, there are also those who have been forced to stay in the area or return there, due to economic constraints or political obscurantism.

Invisible but ever-present, caesium-137 and strontium-90, radionuclides with a half-life of around 30 years, have caused long-term damage to 5% of Ukrainian and 23% of Belarussian soil, reducing the local populations to a state of subsistence living. At present, the situation is characterised by pandemics of thyroid cancer, leukaemia, congenital deformities, and an unprecedented ecological genocide far outstripping any individual state's budgetary, sanitary and medical capacities, let alone those of successor states to the Soviet Union. The scientific community predicts that, in terms of ecological fallout in the ecosystem and pathological after-effects, the worst is yet to come for the 'Chernobyl generations'.

One scientist, Professor V. B. Nesterenko¹, director of the independent Belarussian Institute of Radiation Safety 'Belrad', is conducting pioneering research into nuclear pathologies, devoting all his efforts and the meagre resources available to the Institute to developing medical follow-up and treatments for the people of the affected region, in the face of the numerous difficulties and constraints prevalent in Belarus.

- Confronted with this human drama and the challenge of reconciling needs with resources, does the Council recognise that the political situation in Belarus can under no circumstances justify a withdrawal or even a disengagement from the Union's duty to provide humanitarian and medical assistance for this European people, but rather that it calls for a redoubling of efforts and presence to help this martyred people and its independent medical personnel and scientists?

- What recommendations does the Council intend to make to the Commission in support of the Belrad Institute and its director, Professor Nesterenko, following the guidelines set out by its previous president, Mr Aznar²?

¹ <http://www.fortunecity.com/boozers/vines/860/Nester/nesteree.htm>

² 'We must make use of the TACIS programme to combat the consequences of the tragedy of the accident at Chernobyl. These actions (TACIS) must be carried out through civil society, given that the current state of

- Why will the Council not encourage the Commission to set up a programme of curative holidays for Belarussian, Ukrainian and Russian children within the EU's medical services and hospitals?

bilateral relations between the European Union and Belarus does not allow actions or programmes of cooperation to be carried out with the Belarussian government or administration' (30 April 2002)