

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0024/03

by Yves Piétrasanta (Verts/ALE), Catherine Guy-Quint (PSE), Harlem Désir (PSE), Renzo Imbeni (PSE), Gérard Onesta (Verts/ALE), Francis Wurtz (GUE/NGL), Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), Alonso Puerta (GUE/NGL), Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca (PPE-DE), Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE), Monica Frassoni (Verts/ALE), Giuseppe Di Lello Finuoli (GUE/NGL), Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL), Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE), Didier Rod (Verts/ALE), Danielle Auroi (Verts/ALE), Paul Lannoye (Verts/ALE), Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), Caroline Jackson (PPE-DE), Struan Stevenson (PPE-DE), Theodorus Bouwman (Verts/ALE), Armando Cossutta (GUE/NGL), Nuala Ahern (Verts/ALE), Jan Wiersma (PSE) and Robert Goodwill (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

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 Commission 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 support does the Commission intend to give the Belrad Institute and its director, Professor Nesterenko, following President Romano Prodi's declaration of 8 April 2002²?

- Why will the Commission not set up a programme of curative holidays for Belarussian,

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

² '[...] It remains imperative to maintain assistance programmes to remedy the human consequences of the Chernobyl disaster as well as to support civil society'.

Ukrainian and Russian children within the EU's medical services and hospitals?

- What is the current status of the 'policies on assistance to tackle the problems arising from the accident' mentioned by the Commission in its answer of 3 September 2001 to written question E-1570/01¹ by Mrs Isler Béguin MEP?

¹ OJ C 40 E of 14.2.2002, p. 54