

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3599/09
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to the Commission

Subject: Common EU precautionary measures against a swine influenza pandemic

The illness A(H1N1), known as swine influenza, which evidently originated in Mexico, is spreading round the world. According to the WHO, the disease may reach pandemic status (level 6), though at present it is at level 5. According to the WHO statement of 4 May 2009, almost 1000 cases of the infection have already been reported in 20 countries.

Individual cases of infection have been reported in the EU Member States, but no genuine threat of an epidemic is perceived as yet. On the other hand, nationals of EU Member States have been subjected to precautionary measures outside the EU as an indirect result of the epidemic outside the EU, for example in Hong Kong, where nationals of several countries were placed in quarantine in a hotel, even though they are not ill.

The EU health authorities' capacity to tackle a pandemic is generally regarded as good. However, capacities vary from one Member State to another. The essential thing is to ensure the availability of the necessary medicines in addition to general precautionary measures.

Does the Commission consider that the EU's preparedness for a possible swine influenza pandemic is sufficient, and is it possible to improve the effectiveness of common EU action?