

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3485/09
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to the Commission

Subject: Reaction to swine flu in humans

The WHO has declared phase four alert for the swine flu virus. This virus is highly mutable. The specialised literature shows that the four viral pandemics of 1889, 1918, 1957 and 1968 evolved in waves as they adapted to humans. In the first two cases, the second wave was severer than the first; in 1918, the first wave, occurring in March, was far more benign, whereas the second, coming in the autumn, claimed 35 million deaths. It is therefore essential to ensure rapid reaction and to undertake research in order to ensure the availability, as soon as possible, of vaccines and treatments enabling the immunisation and protection of the population against the evolution of the virus.

It is at the same time vital that the population should be informed and that the European authorities should not send out confused or conflicting signals. It does not here appear a good example that the Commissioner for health, Androulla Vassiliou, should have given a personal opinion advising against travel to the countries affected by the swine flu outbreak, i.e., mainly, Mexico and the US, when this position did not receive the support of the Commission or the Member States.

What measures have been adopted by the EU with a view to the immunisation and protection of the population against the evolution of this illness? Can we expect a coordinated response, backed up by clear and exact information, to epidemics of this nature?