

**Question for written answer P-003963/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE)

Subject: Alarming spread of the H1N1 virus in Greece

The H1N1 virus, also known as 'swine flu', is a type of influenza that first appeared in April 2009, spreads rapidly to humans and is responsible for a global epidemic, causing large numbers of deaths.

Indeed, while patients with the virus can mostly be cured, it can prove fatal to persons suffering from chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease, but also to pregnant women and young children. In accordance with the provisions of Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (on public health), the European Union has been working towards preventing and combating the spread of the virus, focusing on five key areas: the introduction of a vaccine, planning vaccination strategies, supporting the creation of a common supply of vaccines, communicating with the public and supporting non-European countries. For it is important to support actions to address a public health threat with potentially grave socio-economic consequences.

According to a census conducted in 29 European countries by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control between the end of January and the beginning of February 2014, the most intense 'influenza activity' occurred in Greece, while there was average influenza activity in Bulgaria, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain¹. The remaining 22 European countries experienced low influenza activity. The Greek Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (KEELPNO) has recorded alarming figures: so far, 98 deaths are associated with the virus and 48 people are in a critical condition. Moreover, the patients belong to the most vulnerable groups and are unvaccinated, while the mortality rate of patients admitted to intensive care is now 35 %.² The Athens Medical Association has repeatedly highlighted the alarming pace of the spread of the disease in Greece and the shortage of vaccines and lack of control and prevention strategies. It has announced³ that among both vulnerable groups and health professionals this year's vaccination coverage has only reached 35 %.

In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. What measures are planned to overcome the alarming disparities between Member States regarding this influenza?
2. What measures have been taken to ensure effective coordination at EU level, in particular with regard to support for Member States in the fight against the epidemic? What is the reason for the rapid spread of the disease in Greece and the large number of victims there?
3. Is the EU cooperating with the Greek government on the strategy and the means to tackle this disease? If so, what are the results?

¹ <http://www.tovima.gr/science/article/?aid=567989>.

² <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/03/19/greece-influenza-outbreak-to-last-until-easter/#sthash.KnB3EL4D.dpuf>.

³ Press Release by the Athens Medical Association, ISA: 'The Lack of a National Prevention Policy Costs Lives', 11/01/2014, 'Death Toll: the Epidemic of Influenza in Greece Compared with other European Countries - The ISA will Endeavour to Cover the Ministry of Health's inertia for the period 2014-15', 23/3/2014, 'The Lack of a Vaccination Policy in Greece is Criminal: 58 Lives Would Have Been Saved by a Flu Vaccine Costing EUR 6!' 23/3/2014.