

Serious cross-border threats to health

2011/0421(COD) - 17/10/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Gilles PARGNEAUX (S&D, FR) on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on serious cross-border threats to health.

The committee recommends that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading, under the ordinary legislative procedure, should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

Subject matter: Members consider that this Decision should **define the roles, duties and responsibilities of the key actors** and structures at Union level, as well as the methods of cooperation and coordination envisaged between the various institutions.

This Decision shall apply in case of threats of biological origin, consisting of communicable diseases, **including human zoonotic infections**.

Preparedness and response planning: Member States shall, in liaison with the Commission and on the basis of its recommendations, within the Health Security Committee, address the following issues: (i) the **adoption of guidance and other awareness materials** on the health and hygiene measures that the public must follow in the event of serious cross-border threats to health; (ii) the communication of **best practices**.

Members also stress that **information on communicable disease monitoring and vaccination coverage** as set out in Decision 2119/98/EC on epidemiological surveillance will be essential to Commission led preparedness and response planning.

Recalling that according to the World Health Organisation, more than 60% of human infections are zoonoses originating in animals or animal products, the report highlights that an holistic approach needs to be taken, with coordination and close cooperation between the **human health and veterinary sectors** being a crucial component of this.

The Health Security Committee shall advise the health ministers of the Member States and the Commission on the preparation and coordination of contingency plans.

Communication strategy: Members consider that this decision should further stress the importance of implementing a consistent and coordinated communication strategy should a crisis arise. They propose introducing a specific article stipulating that the actors in the Early Warning and Response System shall develop their communication strategy in line with the case in hand in order to keep citizens informed of the risk and the measures taken. That communication strategy shall stipulate the content of the message and the time of communication about the problem in question, including the most suitable arrangements for distribution.

Risk assessment and common public health measures: public health risk assessment should also be **based on the opinion of the WHO** in the case of an international public health emergency. The common temporary measures adopted should be consistent with the recommendations established by the World Health Organisation in the case of an international public health emergency. When adopting common temporary public health measures, the Commission must specify the reasons for adopting these measures.

Recognition of emergency situations: Members state that the term ‘emergency situations’ should **cover everything**. There is no need to specify pandemic influenza situations separately.

National authorities and representatives: as there are various Member States where responsibility for public health is not an exclusively national matter, but is substantially decentralised, Members consider it crucial to **guarantee that national authorities involve the relevant decision-making authorities** in the implementation of this decision in the Member States. They stress that the public nature of the appointment of structures or authorities which are part of the Community network should be emphasised. Measures as regards the **confidentiality** of personal data should be strengthened.

Political dialogue: Members state that regular dialogue should be established between the **Commission and the European Parliament** so that the latter may be informed of the activities and the proper functioning of the Early Warning and Response System.

In the case of a health warning, the Commission must, within the two months following the adoption of measures, submit a detailed report to the European Parliament and the Council on the content of these measures and their contribution to reducing the serious cross-border threat to health.