International health regulations

2007/2079(INI) - 26/06/2007

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted an own-initiative report drawn up by Miroslav **Ouzky** (EPP-ED, CZ) on International Health Regulations (IHR), and acknowledged the significance of a clear international mechanism which aims to prevent and control the spread of disease, and to provide a public health response proportionate to the risks and accessible to all those who need it. It referred to the World Health Assembly Resolution of 26 May 2006 calling for voluntary early application of certain IHR aspects relating to pandemic influenza, and called on the international community to apply the WHO code of good practice on the rapid sharing of strains, published in January 2007. The Committee stressed the urgent need to implement the International Health Regulations in a coordinated manner across the Community, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, while simultaneously strengthening existing systems and capacities.

It also stressed the need to support the development of information systems, both those meant for exchange of information between healthcare providers and those providing information for patients. Furthermore, in order to achieve a high level of protection and preparedness in a highly mobile world, it was absolutely necessary to cooperate with neighbouring and third countries. Members underlined the need for close cooperation between national as well as between national and European authorities when exchanging information in the area of public health safety in order to optimise implementation and better protect EU citizens from public health emergencies of international concern (PHEICs);

The Committee recalled the role of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and the EU Early Warning and Response System for public health threats (EWRS) in implementing the International Health Regulations and in cases of emergency. The Commission was asked to:

- formalise the ECDC’s role in the implementation of the IHR, particularly regarding the collection of data on issues within its mandate;

- find ways and means of supporting the establishment of adequate systems in neighbouring and third countries through financing and regional development mechanisms;

- define ways and means that will make it possible to support the WHO's policy concerning access to pandemic vaccines for developing countries;

- develop programmes to tackle European and global health threats such as healthcare associated infections and the growing resistance to antibiotic treatments.