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National action plans to deal with and prevent a possible epidemic of bird flu in Europe

Written question No 479 to the Committee of Ministers
presented by Mr Hagberg

Recently the question of what might happen if an influenza epidemic were to break out inside Europe has become a highly topical issue. Concern about a possible influenza epidemic is partly based on all the media attention that the bird flu has been given. In Europe, the bird flu has not yet spread beyond birds. Furthermore, there is little risk that the virus may develop in such a way that human beings are infected. Nevertheless, European countries must be well prepared in the event of a large-scale epidemic.

This would require co-operation and mutual support on the part of all European countries. Each country should also draw up a national action plan for dealing with and preventing a possible epidemic. In Sweden, we have drawn up such a national action plan. The national action plan should clarify questions regarding the purchase and storage of antiviral pharmaceuticals, the capacity of vaccine production to ensure that the whole population is able to obtain vaccine whenever necessary, the introduction of an early-warning system and the provision of well prepared routines for dealing with infected flocks of birds.

In the light of this, I would like to ask the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers which measures it intends to take in order to encourage more countries to draw up national action plans to deal with and prevent a possible epidemic in Europe.

*Signed*¹:

HAGBERG, Michael, Sweden, SOC

¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group