



## Recommendation 1725 (2005)<sup>1</sup>

# Europe and bird flu - preventive measures in the health field

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly supports the appeal by the United Nations Summit in New York on 16 September 2005 for international mobilisation against bird flu, and the recommendations made by experts at the 2nd European Conference on Influenza held in Malta from 10 to 14 September 2005.
2. The Assembly welcomes the decision taken by the United Nations to appoint a co-ordinator of the United Nations for the bird flu.
3. It is also concerned by the threat of a bird flu pandemic and by the fact that most countries are unprepared to deal with this threat.
4. The pandemic could also have serious consequences for the economy and health systems of member states.
5. Experts have observed an increase in the number of cases of bird flu on poultry farms and note that certain epizootic diseases can lead to sometimes fatal human contamination. Possible mutations of the bird flu virus could also result in direct human to human transmission, whereas the human immune system is not equipped to resist this virus.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore fully endorses the recommendations by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) concerning the steps to be taken if poultry flocks are infected.
7. Only a small number of member states have set up an early warning system and taken preventive measures against the new virus.
8. The Parliamentary Assembly deplores the flagrant lack of medicines, both vaccines and anti-viral medicines, which would be one of the most effective ways of countering this pandemic.
9. It regrets that the countries at risk are having to face the pandemic alone without the necessary financial resources to buy anti-viral medicines and vaccines to build up adequate stocks.
10. The European Commission's proposal to set up a solidarity fund to reimburse some of the costs of using vaccines and anti-viral medicines to developing countries, if a bird flu pandemic were to break out, deserves the Assembly's full support.
11. The action plan adopted by the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe in Warsaw on 16 and 17 May 2005 underlined the fact that protection of health as a social human right is an essential condition for social cohesion and economic stability.
12. Consequently, the Parliamentary Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to :
  - 12.1. establish co-operation programmes with the World Health Organization (WHO) and step up the Council of Europe's health protection activities ;

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1. Assembly debate on 6 October 2005 (31st Sitting) (see [Doc. 10707](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur : Mr Jacquat). Text adopted by the Assembly on 6 October 2005 (31st Sitting).



- 12.2. ask the relevant committee of experts to take the necessary steps to harmonise the authorisation procedure for vaccines and facilitate international access to them by making them available more rapidly to countries that do not manufacture them ;
- 12.3. recommend that the governments of member states and countries with observer status :
  - 12.3.1. provide backing for WHO activities aimed at preventing and combating the risks of a pandemic ;
  - 12.3.2. take action to provide consumers with transparent information on the real dangers linked to eating the poultry available on their domestic markets ;
  - 12.3.3. ensure that the recommendations of the OIE and the FAO concerning in particular the quarantining of contaminated poultry and the destruction of infected birds are strictly applied ;
  - 12.3.4. allocate additional financial resources rapidly to the prevention and combating of bird flu, in order to prevent the outbreak of a human pandemic ;
  - 12.3.5. as a matter of great urgency, start public awareness campaigns to inform farmers and breeders of the risks and of the strategies for combating this scourge ;
  - 12.3.6. provide substantial compensation for poultry farmers whose flocks are infected by the virus ;
  - 12.3.7. improve health and hygiene services, including research into possible health additives to commercial foodstuff ;
  - 12.3.8. provide a sufficient stock of masks as preliminary prevention, namely for poultry farmers living in countries at risk ;
  - 12.3.9. support the establishment of a regional medical surveillance system ;
  - 12.3.10. take the necessary steps to increase the capacity to produce anti-viral medicines and vaccines, and make them accessible to developing countries ;
  - 12.3.11. take steps to set up a solidarity fund to reimburse some of the costs involved in using vaccines and anti-viral medicines to developing countries ;
  - 12.3.12. ensure that any relevant virus material is made available without delay to all appropriate institutes and laboratories concerned in order to ensure the fast and sufficient production of vaccines ;
  - 12.3.13. ensure that a sufficient production and distribution of vaccines is not hindered by patent law.