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Vaccine hesitancy: a major public health issue

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Vaccination is a simple gesture and to date, it remains the safest and most effective method to protect against many infectious diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it prevents 2 to 3 million deaths a year. However, in Europe and elsewhere, in recent years, there has been a resurgence of diseases preventable by vaccination such as measles. In fact, in the WHO European Region, the total number of people infected with the measles virus in 2018 was the highest of the decade.

This worrying trend can be explained in particular by a rise in the anti-vaccination movement in Europe, fuelled by social media and anti-establishment populists who sow fear and rejection of vaccination. It is a major public health problem that puts the lives of millions of people at risk. WHO has ranked vaccine hesitancy as one of the "ten threats to global health in 2019".

The Council of Europe member States each organise their immunisation schedule by distinguishing between obligatory and recommended vaccines. The resurgence of certain diseases has led some member States to extend their immunisation obligations. These measures may revive the debate around immunisation obligations and fundamental rights.

The Parliamentary Assembly should call on member States to co-operate in the fight to prevent disease, to improve immunisation coverage by taking into account the WHO recommendations for routine immunisation, while combating vaccine hesitancy through awareness-raising activities and educational measures for citizens.