



EU Commissioner Kyprianou Urges Rapid Action against Danger of Bird Flu

- **EU incentives for increasing vaccine capacities make an impact**
- **Member states must rapidly implement a catalogue of measures**
- **Investment in the health of its own citizens**

“The impending dangers resulting from the bird flu demand rapid countermeasures,” urged EU Commissioner of Health Markos Kyprianou at the European Health Forum Gastein. The Commissioner took advantage of the most important health policy event in the European Union to urge member states to act fast in the preparation for the impending danger of pandemic. “Time is running out and we cannot wait any longer”.

The package of EU measures, which include on the one hand financial incentives for the pharmaceutical industry to increase production capacities for vaccines and on the other hand a kind of “advance order” by member states of the as of yet to be developed vaccine, has taken effect. “We are using market mechanisms in order to initiate a prophylactic measure which is absolutely necessary. The measure, however, has to be implemented by the member states.” Kyprianou has appealed to the EU states to consider the costs as an “investment in the health of their own citizens”.

Just as important, however, is the EU’s coordinating function for activities on a national level for disease prevention as well as for measures which can be take in the event of an outbreak. “Global threats can only be coordinated and effectively countered on an international basis.”

The aim of the EU Commission’s current efforts is to have a sufficient amount of an effective vaccine quickly available should the bird flu spread to large parts of Europe. At present it would take around eight months following outbreak of the virus to have enough of the vaccine available. “If the member states implement the EU programme for preparation of pandemic, we can shorten this period to a few weeks,” says Kyprianou.

The EU Commission also emphasised the importance of the European Health Forum in Gastein. “With the EHFG we have a significant platform for the exchange of ideas and know-how in European health policy.”

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Further press information and illustrative material on the EHFG can be found at www.ehfg.org