

Citizens' summary – New EU measures to tackle cross-border public-health threats

A new legal framework will help national governments purchase vaccines jointly, increase preparedness levels and coordinate responses to public-health threats such as disease outbreaks and environmental disasters.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Communicable disease outbreaks as well as chemical, biological, environmental and other accidents pose serious public-health threats far beyond the countries where they occur.
- Protection requires preparedness planning, monitoring, early warning and a coordinated response once a disaster has struck.

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

- A new Decision covering **all types** of serious cross-border threats to health would replace [Decision 2119/98 on surveillance and control of communicable diseases](#).
- A new legal framework would enable national governments to purchase vaccines jointly – meaning more could be procured during a pandemic.
- The EU's [Health Security Committee](#) – currently an informal body – would be established on a formal basis, making possible coherent coordination of preparations for and responses to serious cross-border health threats.
- Crisis communication would be improved for all serious cross-border health threats. Communication with the public is an integral part of the response, since their acceptance of measures taken for public-health purposes is vital if those measures are to be effective.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **National governments** – would benefit from an improved EU-wide health-security framework and increased capacity to mount a coordinated response to health threats.
- **Citizens** – would be better protected from serious cross-border threats to public health.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- Serious public-health threats (such as the H1N1 pandemic (2009), volcanic ash cloud (2010) and *E. coli* outbreak (2011)) do not stay within national borders and cannot be confined to a specific sector or dealt with by national governments acting alone.
- Improved cooperation and legally binding measures will make national governments better prepared to respond to cross-border health threats in the EU. Each country depends on the others' level of preparedness and response, and good coordination will better protect the public from such threats.
- The proposal will help implement the [European Health Strategy](#) and contribute to the objective of promoting health (in particular avoiding preventable damage to health) as an integral part of other EU policies.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- Late 2012 or early 2013