



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 26 October 2013

## **Statement by Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, on suspected polio cases in Syria**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) received reports that twenty two cases of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP), possibly caused by the poliovirus, have been diagnosed in Deir-ez-zur in Northern Syria. Final results are awaited from the regional reference laboratory of the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO. These could be the first cases in Syria since 1999 and the situation is extremely worrying given the present security situation and the problems with access to those who will need to be vaccinated.

The European Union is prepared for such an eventuality, and through our humanitarian budget we have already committed €7 million to the WHO under our latest €250 million package. This brings our total allocation to the UN health organisation to €13.5 million since the beginning of the crisis. We stand ready to do more if needed.

We are constantly monitoring the situation inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries. We are in contact with the WHO epidemiology surveillance unit based in Amman and others in the region to see how we can be of further assistance if the cases are confirmed. At this stage the EU's assistance in response to the Syria crisis, humanitarian and other, amounts to around €2 billion.

By working together with our partners in the field, the EU hopes that we can nip this potential polio resurgence in the bud and spare the Syrian people from yet another source of suffering.

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**For more information**

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

& in Arabic: <http://echo-arabic.eu>

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/georgieva/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm)

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