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European Union Committee

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15 March 2021

Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

Dear Ed,

COM(2020) 318: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: Short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December on the above Communication, which was considered by our Environment Sub-Committee on 10 March.

We note that the Government secured ad hoc access to the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) in relation to serious cross-border health threats via the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and welcome that development.

You stated in your letter that non-EU countries have access to some of the Epidemic Intelligence Information System (EPIS) platforms: we urge the Government to seek such access. We live in a connected world and disease does not respect boundaries; it can only be helpful to have access to as much cross-border health information as possible.

We are now content to close this correspondence. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contributions to the Sub-Committee's work.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Jessica Mulley, Clerk to the Commons Committee; Les Saunders and Donald Harris in the Cabinet Office; and Rebecca Diment, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Kinnoull', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee