

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002832/24
to the Commission
Leire Pajín (S&D), Nicolás González Casares (S&D)
(9 December 2024)**

Subject: Outbreak of a mysterious infectious disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 5 December 2024, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) confirmed that, since 24 October 2024, Kwango Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had seen 376 cases of a mysterious infectious disease, including 79 fatalities ⁽¹⁾. The flu-like symptoms, which are particularly severe in children, include fever, headaches, coughing, difficulty breathing and anaemia.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the grave threat that disease outbreaks pose to Europe and to the world as a whole. Robust and sustainable approaches to prevention, preparedness and response that include coordinated action to be taken before, during and after a crisis, both at EU level and in conjunction with third countries, are essential in the fight against cross-border health threats.

In view of this:

1. What steps is the Commission taking to confirm the above data and work with Africa CDC to carry out the necessary monitoring?
2. How does the Commission intend to strengthen third countries' health systems and their prevention, preparedness and response capacities to cope with health emergencies?
3. What action does the Commission intend to take to manage cross-border health threats, specifically in regard to infectious diseases, and what does the EU's preparedness plan look like?

Submitted: 9.12.2024

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(22 April 2025)**

The Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have been monitoring the disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) via epidemic intelligence and regular contacts with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the African CDC (Af-CDC).

The Health Security Committee held an ad-hoc meeting on the topic on 12 December 2024 ⁽¹⁾. The WHO Regional Office for Africa provided an overview of the epidemiological situation and informed on mortality, severity, and etiological agents. The ECDC explained that the risk posed to EU/European Economic Area countries is low.

On 27 December 2024, the WHO informed that the undiagnosed disease reported in the DRC's Kwango province is due to the combination of malaria and common respiratory infections in groups facing food insecurity ⁽²⁾.

The Af-CDC receives support via the EU4Health and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument — Global Europe (NDICI-GE) ⁽³⁾ Programmes to strengthen its prevention, preparedness and response capacities (PPRC) for emerging epidemics.

The Commission works to strengthen third countries' health systems, including in the DRC, to support their PPRC through Global, regional and bilateral programmes ⁽⁴⁾.

The Commission acts against serious cross-border threats to health (SCBTH) with a variety of tools and mechanisms defined in Regulations 851/2004 ⁽⁵⁾, 2022/2371 ⁽⁶⁾ and 2022/2372 ⁽⁷⁾ and Decision No 1313/2013/EU ⁽⁸⁾.

¹ <https://x.com/AfricaCDC/status/1864706577636131118>

⁽¹⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5c977252-7aa8-4219-a57b-b853bb2531d1_en?filename=security_20241212_sr_en.pdf

⁽²⁾ As published in WHO's Disease Outbreak News Item <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2024-DON547>

⁽³⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en

⁽⁴⁾ E.g.: the Pandemic Fund, Global Fund, Gavi Alliance, etc.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02004R0851-20221226>

⁽⁶⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2371/oj>

⁽⁷⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2022:314:FULL&from=EN>

⁽⁸⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02013D1313-20231218>

It is developing a Union PPR plan to promote a coordinated response to SCBTH. It will consider provisions on joint arrangements for governance, capacities and resources, and cross-border interregional preparedness elements ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ As included in Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2371/oj>