

EN
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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(30.6.2025)

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published its first Rapid Risk Assessment '*Cluster of pneumonia cases caused by a novel coronavirus, Wuhan, China, 2020*' on 17 January 2020¹. The ECDC closely followed the situation and updated its Rapid Risk Assessments when trustworthy scientific information became available. The ECDC published its second update to this Rapid Risk Assessment on 26 January 2020², which considered the potential impact of 2019-nCoV outbreaks as high and further global spread as likely, thus warning a pandemic could occur.

Neither the Commission, the ECDC or the European Medicines Agency were involved nor participated in the simulation exercises (Atlantic Storm, CLADE X, Event 201 and Spars Pandemic 2025-2028). Therefore, the Commission cannot comment on them.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic the Commission routinely organised capacity building activities to prepare for possible cross-border threats to health. These trainings on prevention, preparedness and response to cross border threats to health, contingency planning for animal diseases and zoonoses³, and simulation exercises focusing on rapid risk assessment of chemical threats⁴.

Furthermore, the Commission and the ECDC organised the exercise 'Blue Orchid'⁵ to test crisis management functions, procedures, and communication channels between the Commission and the ECDC. They also carried regional expert workshops on pandemic preparedness planning in March 2019 to coordinate national approaches applied by EU/European Economic Area countries to planning, implementation, and evaluation of (influenza) pandemic preparedness plans.

The ECDC published a Handbook on simulation exercises in the EU public health settings on 2 June 2014⁶.

¹ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/rapid-risk-assessment-cluster-pneumonia-cases-caused-novel-coronavirus-wuhan>.

² Risk assessment: outbreak of acute respiratory syndrome associated with a novel coronavirus, China; First cases imported in the EU/EEA; second update: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/risk-assessment-outbreak-acute-respiratory-syndrome-associated-novel-0>.

³ <https://better-training-for-safer-food.ec.europa.eu/training/>.

⁴ https://health.ec.europa.eu/scientific-committees/former-scientific-committees/scientific-committee-health-environmental-and-emerging-risks-2016-2021/scheer-minutes-working-groups-2016-2021_en.

⁵ Organised on 8 February 2019.

⁶ Handbook on simulation exercises in EU public health settings: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/handbook-simulation-exercises-eu-public-health-settings>.