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E-003628/2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(16.12.2025)

The ‘Lemkin’ Simulation Exercise took place in Athens, Greece on 29-31 October 2019. The exercise was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) acting on its mandate to help EU/European Economic Area (EEA) countries to build robust preparedness systems through the delivery of preparedness workshops and simulation exercises¹.

The main purpose of this exercise was to coordinate law enforcement and public health sectors to respond to a cross-border health threat. The scenario was a hypothetical release of a biological agent causing Glanders (*Burkholderia mallei*) in Europe. The exercise gathered 56 participants from 25 Member States and two EEA countries, including law enforcement representatives from 11 Member States and public health representatives from 26 EU/EEA countries.

The report of the exercise has not been published². The handbook in question has not been finalised.

Neither coercive public measures, nor restrictions on fundamental rights, nor measures of media control or censorship were tested during the exercise.

The Commission, in its reply of 30 June 2025 to Parliamentary Question E-001040/2025³ (Preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic) already answered when and from what source EU institutions became aware of a possible upcoming pandemic. The ECDC published its first COVID-19 related Rapid Risk Assessment on 17 January 2020⁴, which outlines that on 31 December 2019, in the Municipal Health Commission in Wuhan City, China reported a cluster of 27 pneumonia cases of unknown aetiology, including seven severe cases, with a common reported link to Wuhan's Huanan seafood wholesale market.

¹ In line with Decision 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 2119/98/EC.

² The information contained in the documents covers, inter alia, general emergency response capabilities affecting or likely to affect public health. The disclosure of these documents would reveal details about how preparedness exercises are organised, including details about the information flow within and between European institutions and bodies as well as Member States and hypothetical scenarios and put at risk the public security of the Union, as any possible weakness could be exploited against the Union interests, including in possible future emergency situations.

³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-001040-ASW_EN.html.

⁴ Rapid Risk Assessment ‘Cluster of pneumonia cases caused by a novel coronavirus, Wuhan, China, 2020’: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/rapid-risk-assessment-cluster-pneumonia-cases-caused-novel-coronavirus-wuhan>.