

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001875/26
to the Commission
Leire Pajín (S&D)
(6 May 2026)**

Subject: Preparedness measures against zoonotic diseases in view of the recent outbreak of hantavirus

In May 2026, three people died following a suspected hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship sailing between Argentina and Cabo Verde, according to the World Health Organisation. Other suspected cases have been under investigation following this incident.

Hantaviruses are a group of rare zoonotic viruses, transmitted mainly through contact with the faeces or urine of infected rodents, and can cause serious diseases such as hantavirus pulmonary syndrome or haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome. There is currently no specific treatment or widely available vaccine, making preparedness crucial for likely future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential.

1. What measures is the Commission taking to strengthen epidemiological surveillance of rare but potentially serious zoonoses, including hantaviruses, in the EU and in cooperation with non-EU countries?
2. What initiatives does the Commission envisage as regards the exchange of scientific data and coordinated preparedness with non-EU countries in order to be ready for possible zoonotic outbreaks in high-risk environments?
3. What is the Commission doing to strengthen the EU's preparedness for future zoonotic and emerging infectious disease threats, in particular by supporting the development of antiviral medicines and rapidly adaptable vaccine platforms, including mRNA technologies?

Submitted: 6.5.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(25 August 2026)**

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), through surveillance activities, identifies outbreaks caused by any novel, unusual and severe pathogen ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission counts on an early warning and response system (EWRS) for the notification of events ⁽²⁾.

Under Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 ⁽³⁾, European Reference Laboratories ⁽⁴⁾ are established. The EU Health Task Force ⁽⁵⁾ was mobilised during the Andes virus outbreak.

The ECDC is also supporting the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) ⁽⁶⁾ to increase its response capacities.

The network of European Public Health Institutes promotes collaboration with non-EU countries, including African countries and their public health institutes and African agencies (including Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the African Medicines Agency).

It is mobilised for technical assistance, workforce development training and peer to peer cooperation.

The Global Health Resilience Initiative ⁽⁷⁾ is establishing a strategic framework to respond quicker to health threats in an interconnected world.

In 2026/2027, the Commission is investing more than EUR 500 million for the development of medical countermeasures, including EUR 225 million for next generation influenza vaccines and EUR 20 million for dengue therapeutics.

Under the Medical Countermeasures Strategy ⁽⁸⁾, the Commission will continue to advance medical countermeasures' development and strengthen related global health threat intelligence.

Hantaviridae were identified as a viral family of high-priority concern for the EU in the Commission's 2025 Health Threat Prioritisation Assessment ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/tools/outbreak-surveillance-tools>.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2017/253/oj.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022R2371&qid=1780652312049>

⁽⁴⁾ In the case of hantaviruses, the European Union Reference Laboratory for Emerging, Rodent-borne, and Zoonotic Viral Pathogen <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/eurl-ph-erzvl/>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/about-ecdc/what-we-do/partners-and-networks/support-and-services-eueea-countries/health-task-force>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/about-ecdc/partners-and-networks/international-cooperation/africa-cdc-ecdc-partnership>.

⁽⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/sv/ip_26_1074.

⁽⁸⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-emergency-preparedness-and-response-hera/preparedness/medical-countermeasures-strategy_en.

⁽⁹⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/dc2be7e4-0327-4f00-9306-8eb03c12e6ce_en?filename=com_2025-529-1_annex_en.pdf.