

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002007/26
to the Commission**

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(13 May 2026)

Subject: Managing the hantavirus-related health risk, transparency in EU vaccination policy and safeguards against further emergency backsliding

Recent reports of climbing hantavirus case numbers are fuelling growing public concern. A zoonotic disease carried mainly by wild rodents, hantavirus can, in some cases, lead to severe respiratory or renal complications.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, extraordinary measures were adopted to deal with the crisis; these encroached on individual freedoms and people's right to work and to free movement, with examples including controversial instruments such as the EU digital COVID certificate and strong pressure to get vaccinated.

What is more, question marks and concerns still hang over the Commission's centralised procurement of the COVID vaccines. A case in point is 'Pfizergate', which involved Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and sparked questions about the transparency of negotiations with pharmaceutical companies.

Today, many fear that future health emergencies could be used as a pretext for further curbs on human rights, without proper safeguards to ensure transparency and proportionality.

In light of the above:

1. What is the current assessment of the health risk associated with hantavirus in the EU?
2. Has the Commission ruled out introducing similar instruments to the EU digital COVID certificate in future?
3. Does it consider it appropriate to publish in full all correspondence and documents pertaining to health negotiations in the public interest where EU funds and contracts with pharmaceutical companies are involved?

Submitted: 13.5.2026

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(9 July 2026)

The threat assessment carried by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) states that the risk to the general population in the EU/EEA (European Economic Area) from the Andes virus spreading from the MV Hondius cruise ship outbreak is very low ⁽¹⁾.

The virus does not transmit easily between humans, and the close contact required for transmission rarely occurs outside very close personal settings.

Furthermore, the rodent species that typically carry this virus are not native to Europe, so sustained animal-to-human transmission is unlikely.

A public health response requires tailored, context-specific measures to protect populations during public health emergencies. Under Article 21 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 ⁽²⁾, Member States shall consult one another and coordinate within the Health Security Committee (HSC), working in liaison with the Commission, regarding specific response measures.

The HSC has issued an opinion on managing and responding to the Andes hantavirus outbreak ⁽³⁾. The HSC continues to monitor the evolution of the outbreak, while the ECDC's risk assessment remains unchanged.

The Commission is committed to high standards of transparency and accountability and is ensuring the largest possible transparency regarding the use of EU funds.

In line with EU transparency rules, requests for access to documents and correspondences are assessed under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ⁽⁴⁾, ensuring protection of interests under Article 4 where applicable.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/TAB-hantavirus-06052026.pdf>.

⁽²⁾ 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 [2022] OJ L314/1: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022R2371>.

⁽³⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/119f9062-dd9f-408b-916e-d05f2609df8d_en?filename=security_hantavirus_opinion_en.pdf&prefLang=en.

⁽⁴⁾ EULI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/1049/oj>.