

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001887/26
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(7 May 2026)**

Subject: Spread of foot-and-mouth disease in Lesvos and adequacy of European response measures

The findings of the EU VET Initiative mission to Lesvos (24-27 March 2026) were presented at the meeting of the European Commission's Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (animal health and welfare department). According to these findings, the origin of the virus and the timing of its introduction remain uncertain and the epidemiological status of sheep and goats poses a high risk of unnoticed spread, with potential undetected outbreaks. The findings highlight the need for enhanced surveillance, biosecurity measures, diagnostic capacity and human resources, as well as a review of surveillance zones.

Given that the situation is raising serious concerns about public and veterinary health across the EU due to the risk of the virus spreading to other areas, can the Commission answer the following:

1. What specific steps has it taken or does it intend to take to immediately strengthen Greece's operational capacity (human resources, surveillance, diagnostics) and what is the European services' assessment of the necessary staffing level in the affected area?
2. Does it intend to activate transnational cooperation mechanisms, including requesting assistance from other Member States' National Reference Laboratories, to speed up sample analysis and enhance disease tracing?
3. Given the importance of the local Lesvos sheep breed as a valuable genetic resource, does the Commission intend to propose specific protection measures in virus-free areas, such as enhanced surveillance, stricter biosecurity measures and/or targeted preventive vaccination?

Submitted: 7.5.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(18 June 2026)**

The Commission is in close contact with the Greek authorities and supports them through technical exchanges, the deployment of a Veterinary Emergency Team (EUVET) mission ⁽¹⁾, the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and cooperation with the EU Reference Laboratory for Foot and Mouth Disease, which is currently assisting Greece in strengthening and upscaling its diagnostic capacity.

EU co-financing for eligible emergency measures, including surveillance, diagnostics and eradication activities, may be provided under Regulation (EU) 2021/690 ⁽²⁾ (the Single Market Programme). The EU vaccine bank for foot and mouth disease remains available upon request by the competent authority.

⁽¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ec7c4e16-7fce-4243-954b-55967783f5a3_en?filename=reg-com_ahw_202604224_pres-10.pdf.
⁽²⁾ OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/690/oj>.