

Parliament calls for “alarming” spread of Lyme disease to be tackled

- Scale of epidemic constitutes a European health problem, say MEPs
- Calls for member states to share epidemiological data and reports
- The European Commission should draw up an EU-wide plan to combat the disease

The EU should draw up plans to combat the disease, the “silent epidemic” spread by ticks, that remains underdiagnosed and affects around one million Europeans.

MEPs expressed their concern at the alarming rate at which Lyme borreliosis has spread throughout the EU, in a resolution adopted by a show of hands on Thursday. Around one million EU citizens are suffering from the disease.

The Commission should draw up plans to combat the disease at European level, in accordance with the seriousness of this silent epidemic, say MEPs. They encourage the set-up of a European network, including the relevant stakeholders.

The true extent of Lyme borreliosis in the EU is unknown due to the lack of statistics on this disease and the very wide variety of definitions and methods to detecting, diagnosing and treating it in the EU, MEPs say. Many patients are neither promptly diagnosed nor have access to suitable treatment. The disease is under-diagnosed because of the difficulties in detecting symptoms and the absence of appropriate diagnostic tests.

The European Commission should put in place uniform surveillance programmes and work with member states on facilitating standardised diagnostic tests and treatments.

MEPs also call for mandatory reporting in all member states affected by the disease, and for promoting individual tick prevention and control measures in order to contain the spread of the Borrelia bacteria.

Background

Lyme borreliosis is the most common zoonotic disease in Europe, with an estimated 650 000 - 850 000 cases and a higher incidence in Central Europe. Infection occurs in the spring-summer

semester (from April to October), and borreliosis is recognised as an occupational disease for farmers, forestry workers and field researchers.

Infected ticks and the disease seem to be expanding geographically, with instances now also being recorded at higher altitudes and latitudes, as well as in towns and cities. The suspected causes are, among other things, changes in land use, through the afforestation of low-quality land or the expansion of invasive plants, climate change, global warming, excessive humidity and other activities related to human behaviour.

Further information

[Adopted text \(15.11.2018\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(14.11.2018\)](#)

[Question to the Commission](#)

[Procedure file](#)

Contacts

Baptiste CHATAIN

Press Officer

 (+32) 228 40992 (BXL)

 (+33) 3881 74151 (STR)

 (+32) 498 98 13 37

 [@EP_Environment](#)

 baptiste.chatain@europarl.europa.eu



:Infected ticks and the disease seem to be expanding geographically, say MEPs ©AP images/European Union - EP