

Boosting the European Union's defences against cross-border health threats

On 11 November 2020, the European Commission adopted a proposal on serious cross-border threats to health. The proposed regulation aims to strengthen existing structures and mechanisms for better protection, prevention, preparedness and response against all health hazards at EU level. The European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted its report on 13 July 2021. This is due to be voted during the September plenary session, thus setting Parliament's negotiating position and opening the way for interinstitutional negotiations.

Background

The Commission [proposal](#) for a regulation repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU (the 'Cross-border Health Threats Decision') is part of a three-pronged [European health union](#) legislative [package](#), put forward to strengthen the EU's health security framework. The package comprises a [communication](#), a proposal for a new regulation on serious cross-border threats to health, and proposals for regulations to extend the mandates of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ([ECDC](#)) and the European Medicines Agency ([EMA](#)), respectively. Both the cross-border health threats and ECDC proposals are among the Commission, Council and Parliament [Joint Declaration](#) 2021 legislative priority files.

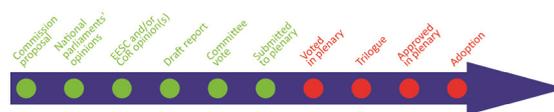
European Commission proposal

The proposal aims to reinforce the Cross-border Health Threats Decision based on the lessons learned from the pandemic. Among other things, it would [develop](#) an EU health crisis and pandemic preparedness plan that includes inter-regional elements, alongside coordination on the adoption of national plans. This would be coupled with a framework for reporting and auditing on preparedness, and there would be regular stress tests carried out with the Member States. Moreover, the proposal would create a high-performing epidemiological surveillance system at EU level, and introduce reporting requirements for Member States on health-system capacity and other relevant data. Not least, it would allow the EU to declare an emergency situation, independently from the World Health Organization, thereby triggering increased coordination.

European Parliament position

While health is a national competence, Parliament has consistently promoted a coherent EU [health policy](#). The draft report on the proposal was discussed in Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) on 22 April 2021. The final committee vote took place on 13 July 2021. Among other things, the [report](#) supports the 'one health' approach that recognises the connection between human and animal health and the environment, and the need for actions against health threats to take into account these three dimensions. It also calls for enhanced cooperation and transparency on joint procurement for medical counter-measures. Once Parliament formally adopts its position, interinstitutional negotiations could begin. The Council agreed its [position](#) on 23 July 2021.

First-reading report: [2020/0322\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Véronique Trillet-Lenoir (Renew Europe, France). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#) and our EP 'Legislative Train Schedule' fiches on the European health union package files: [Cross-border health threats](#), [ECDC mandate extension](#) and [EMA mandate extension](#).



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