Question for written answer E-003050/2020
to the Commission
Rule 138

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Subject: Dangers of COVID-19 and worker protection

The current pandemic and its associated risks are proof that a safe working environment is now more important than ever. Directive 2000/54/EC serves as a reference to protect workers exposed to biological agents.

What distinguishes a Category 3 infection (Hepatitis B, yellow fever or HIV) from a Category 4 infection (Ebola) is the degree of risk of spread in the community and whether or not a prophylactic or effective treatment is available.

The Commission’s Committee for adaptation to technical progress suggests classifying SARS-CoV-2 as a Group 3 biological agent within the meaning of the directive.

Given the high risk of spread of the virus and the lack of any effective treatment and vaccine:

1. Does the Commission intend to classify the SARS-CoV-2 virus as a Group 4 biological agent and, if it were to classify it in Category 3, can it explain its reasons for doing so?

2. Can the Commission say if and how it will take into account both the limited knowledge about how contagious SARS-CoV-2 is and the precautionary principle?

3. Does the Commission plan to introduce specific measures to protect research and diagnostic work?