Question for written answer E-000204/2021
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the world in 2020, and no satisfactory solution has yet been found for the epidemiological crisis. However, the pandemic is helping to raise awareness of the risks and dramatic consequences associated with the emergence of zoonotic diseases.

Understanding how biodiversity affects the transmission of pathogens has long been a central issue among those who study diseases.

A December 2020 in-depth analysis, drafted at the request of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and titled ‘The link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases’ presents examples of zoonotic diseases occurring outside their original native habitats (bovine tuberculosis, leishmaniasis, plague, etc.) and gives examples of zoonotic diseases that have been transmitted between animals and humans (SARS, bird flu, Hendra virus and COVID-19).

The Commission Communication 'Building a European Health Union: Stronger crisis preparedness and response for Europe’ of 11 November 2020 states unequivocally that the likelihood of recurrent outbreaks of infectious diseases is increasing and that long-term trends, such as antimicrobial resistance and pressures on biodiversity and climate change, are steadily accelerating. Both of these are associated with a growing threat of infectious diseases worldwide.

Given the interdependent character of the analysis and the communication, is the Commission considering further realistic financial plans to support the development of national laboratory systems dealing with animal and human pathogens, which would improve coordination on consolidated microbiological testing standards at European level?