

**Question for written answer E-004786/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Variant AY.4.2

The UK Health Security Agency technical briefing No 25 of 16 October 2021 regarding SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation in England states that Delta remains the predominant variant in the UK. Recent official data, however, suggests that 6% of COVID-19 cases which have undergone genetic sequencing bear the hallmarks of a new variant. In May 2021, the Delta variant was initially classified as a variant of concern after it overtook the Alpha variant and became the dominant COVID-19 variant. In July 2021, variant AY.4.2 was identified. This variant contains several new mutations which affect the spike protein used by the virus to enter human cells. The recent rise of AY.4.2 in the UK and its transmission advantage make the case for appropriate mutation monitoring.

In its risk assessment of 30 September 2021, the ECDC warned that if a new variant with a significant transmission advantage over the Delta variant begins to circulate in the EU/EEA, then it is likely to take at least two or three months from initial detection until it achieves an upward trend and eventual dominance.

How does the Commission intend to revise its short-term and medium-term plans for the distribution of a third dose of vaccine in order to make a realistic and viable attempt to counter the previously hypothetical assumption reported by the ECDC in its last risk assessment?