Question for written answer E-005635/2021
to the Commission
Rule 138
Joanna Kopcińska (ECR)

Subject: Omicron 1

On 26 November 2021, the WHO designated variant B.1.1.529 a variant of concern based on the opinion of its Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution. A risk assessment by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published on 15 December 2021 confirms that the emergence of the Omicron variant is of serious concern due to initial reports suggesting a significant transmission advantage and the potential ability of the virus to evade the body's immune response compared to the Delta variant. The main conclusions in the ECDC's latest risk assessments and the recommendations outlined do not differ greatly from those that followed previously identified variants.

Currently, only limited evidence is available regarding monoclonal antibody treatment for people who contract COVID-19 through the Omicron variant. However, as yet unverified data indicate that the combination of substances that have been used until now (*casirivimab* and *imdevimab*) does not neutralise Omicron, whereas *sotrovimab* does. The initial genetic analysis of the antiviral medication *remdesivir* indicates that it is likely to still work against Omicron, although this has yet to be confirmed by laboratory testing.

Given its active participation to date in several projects and programmes aimed at eradicating pandemics, such as ATAC, MANCO and CoroNAb, how is the Commission currently involved in monitoring research on medical substances – particularly in clinical trials – especially in a situation where the Omicron variant poses a new threat?