

**Question for written answer E-001753/2022
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Joanna Kopcińska (ECR)

Subject: Variants BA.4 and BA.5

In April, the WHO added two new Omicron coronavirus variants to its monitoring list: BA.4 and BA.5. These two variants are behind the new wave of infections in southern Africa and have already been detected in Europe.

The ECDC communicable disease threats report of 30 April states that since its last update on 21 April no changes have been made to ECDC variant classifications for variants of concern, variants of interest, variants under monitoring or de-escalated variants. However, on 28 April, ECDC did classify BA.4 and BA.5 as variants of interest.

Early studies of variants BA.4 and BA.5 indicate that they may be fairly effective at evading antibodies from previous infections, but that they are also much less able to evolve in the blood of people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

1. Although the number of new cases and deaths from COVID-19 have been falling since March, to what extent does the epidemiological situation in the southern hemisphere and the serious reports emerging of this new wave of infections indicate that Europe will face a rise in cases in autumn/winter?
2. Is the Commission considering updated recommendations and a course of action for the winter period that will help to reduce COVID-19 infections, given that we do not yet have a fully effective vaccine?