

**Question for oral answer O-000040/2021  
to the Commission**

Rule 136

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on behalf of the ID Group

**Subject:** The origin of SARS-CoV-2 after the latest clues on the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV)

The cost in terms of human lives lost during the COVID-19 pandemic is significant in absolute value, with more than 3.5 million deaths, in addition to the costs of rising levels of poverty, lives upended, careers derailed and increased social unrest. The pandemic has negatively affected global economic growth beyond anything experienced in nearly a century apart from the Second World War.

The Chinese government has a political stake in the origins of the pandemic: since the initial emergence of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China has focused on controlling not only the coronavirus itself but also information about it.

The recent global study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Chinese authorities started as an investigation and then turned into a simple joint study, in which the WHO-led team lacked the mandate and access necessary to investigate the outbreak independently and thoroughly.

Despite the report's conclusions that the virus was most likely transferred to humans from bats via another animal, the origin of SARS-CoV-2 remains unknown and more research is needed.

According to a previously undisclosed US intelligence report, the theory that it was caused by a laboratory leak needs to be seriously taken into account. In fact, the report identified three researchers from the WIV that already in November 2019 became sick with a flu-like illness and had to be hospitalised, shortly before the Chinese authorities identified the first confirmed case of COVID-19 on 8 December 2019.

1. How does the Commission plan to improve cooperation with China on the WHO's follow-up work and its next phases, given the importance of better understanding of the circumstances that allowed this pandemic to develop, and also in order to strengthen global preparedness and better responses for the future? Has the Commission verified with the WHO whether all safety standards and protocols were complied with at the WIV?
2. In the light of the Horizon 2020 Programme funding allocated to the WIV and the WIV's lack of transparency, is the Commission considering putting in place more effective checks on monitoring and verification mechanisms during participation in the project and in the post-funding phase?

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Lapses: 1.9.2021