

**Priority question for written answer P-007032/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: 'English variant' of SARS-CoV-2

We have learnt recently of a mutated and highly infectious form of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, known as the 'English variant', that is circulating in Europe. It seems this variant has been caused by the spike protein mutating in various ways.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control published a study on 20 December 2020 which states that the new variant has been circulating since November, and that this may have an impact on diagnosing the virus, making it necessary to update both molecular and rapid detection swab tests. Furthermore, there might be some issues around the efficacy of the new COVID vaccines as many of them are based around the spike protein sequences.

In view of the above:

1. What steps will the Commission take to coordinate the response to this mutation and avoid uncoordinated national responses, such as happened in February?
2. Since the new variant has been in circulation since November, was the Commission already aware of its existence and does it consider it important to conduct new studies on new diagnostic tools that are sensitive to the new variant?
3. Will this variant cause approval of vaccines based on protein sequences to slow down?

Supporters¹

¹ This question is supported by Members other than the authors: Antonio Maria Rinaldi (ID), Susanna Ceccardi (ID)