

European Respiratory Society submission to the European Commission's consultation on Strategy to support medical countermeasures against public health threats

The European Respiratory Society (ERS)¹ appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the consultation on "Strategy to support medical countermeasures against public health threats."²

As the events of the past years consistently highlighted, there is a need for a coordinated and unified plan to ensure that every country in the European Union (EU) can be prepared against public health threats.³ As it became clear, a united response is key to achieve a fast and effective result.^{4,5}

ERS is aware of and highly valued all the efforts made by DG HERA⁶ since its creation. There is an undeniable need to reinforce the EU's health security framework, and to have an EU-level coordination to prepare and respond to serious cross-border health threats. These should include threats of pandemic such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, antimicrobial resistance and CBRN incidents as well as extreme weather events (increasing substantially in number and strength each and every year). As a large number of natural disasters are in fact strongly, if not directly, connected to climate change, this should also be included.⁷

For this consultation, the European Respiratory Society would like to highlight the following points:

¹ European Respiratory Society website, [European Respiratory Society - ERS](#)

² Have your say – Public Consultations and Feedback, [Strategy to support medical countermeasures against public health threats](#)

³ Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority Better prepare for and respond to cross-border health threats, [Factsheet Hera Emergency_EN.pdf](#)

⁴ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control [How to stop the next pandemic: ECDC publishes guidance to strengthen public health preparedness in the EU/EEA](#)

⁵ EU Preparedness Union Strategy to prevent and react to emerging threats and crises

⁶ Directorate-General for Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority

⁷ [Climate | European Environment Agency's home page](#)

1. Educational needs:

- there is a need for rapid dissemination information and education to medical teams.
 - Identifying sources that can provide them, for example in the form of regular webinars, rapid development of guidelines, diagnostic criteria etc.
 - Public education and awareness through consistent messages across member states are key to minimise misinformation and disinformation.
2. Staff shortages and training must remain a top priority, and it is fundamental to look at ways to increase the number of staff and trainings on specific issues (i.e. pandemic, chemical or nuclear event).
 3. More information and transparency are needed on equipment during medical emergencies, in order to ensure timely and effective reactions.
 4. Coordination of research: the EU Clinical trials register is an important step forward but there is still more to be done when looking at fast tracking of clinical trials and coordination in order to avoid duplication. Appropriate funding for research is also needed.
 5. A clear stockpiling plan and easy to access information should be outlined.

Easy access to information, training and research need to remain at the top of the agenda. All Member States will have to be appropriately prepared to face new and old emergencies in an efficient manner and every citizen in the EU must have access to the appropriate instruments in a moment of crisis.