

ANTIGONE to save Europe?

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The Antigone project will study new forms of bacteria and pathogens

The European Commission allocated additional €12 million from the EU's Research Framework Programme to reinforce Europe's capacity for tackling pathogens such as Escherichia coli (E.coli) bacteria that recently killed 46 people in Europe.

A cross-border consortium called ANTIGONE – ANTicipating the Global Onset of Novel Epidemics will be dedicated to researching pathogens that could pose a threat to human health and some €2.1 million will be specifically earmarked for work on the new E. coli strain.

Better understanding of these pathogens would enable scientists to develop more effective ways to tackle them and potentially prevent future epidemics and deal with new outbreaks. The ANTIGONE consortium will work in close collaboration with another project selected for funding, PREDEMICS.

Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn explained that the EU's policy "is to focus EU research and innovation funding on the things that matter most to Europeans and of course health is right at the top of that list".

ANTIGONE is scheduled to involve 14 partners from seven countries to build the knowledge and gather resources to help identify, study, prevent and counteract unexpected new epidemic threats, in particular the factors that make viral and bacterial pathogens from animals prone to cross the species barrier and be transmitted to humans.

The project will also try to identify possible ways of eradicating disease and draw lessons that may be helpful to prevent future threats.