

# New European research project to respond to unexpected epidemic threats such as *Escherichia coli*

Eurosurveillance editorial team (eurosurveillance@ecdc.europa.eu)<sup>1</sup>

1. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Stockholm, Sweden

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The European Commission has decided to allocate an additional EUR 12 million from the European Union (EU) Research Framework Programme to reinforce Europe's capacity to deal with pathogens such as the new *Escherichia coli* strain that recently infected almost 4,000 people in Europe, resulting in 46 deaths [1]. This funding was announced on Tuesday, 9 August 2011, by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science [2].

This autumn, a cross-border consortium called ANTICIPating the Global Onset of Novel Epidemics (ANTIGONE) will begin research on the new *E. coli* strain – for which about EUR 2.1 million will be dedicated – and other virulent pathogens that could pose a threat to human health.

ANTIGONE is planned to involve 14 partners from seven countries to build knowledge and gather resources to help identify, study, prevent and counteract unexpected new epidemic threats, including Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC), Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF), Ebola, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), plague, Q fever, etc. When new diseases emerge, ANTIGONE will be able to perform and coordinate analysis of the bacteria or viruses involved and of the epidemiology of the disease concerned and also the way the pathogen is transmitted. The project will also try to identify possible ways of eradicating the disease and draw lessons that may help prevent similar threats in the future. The project will also allow for a quick response to any future unexpected human epidemic threat without the need for a new call for proposals.

The consortium will work in close collaboration with another project selected for funding earlier, PREDEMICS (Preparedness, Prediction and Prevention of Emerging Zoonotic Viruses with Pandemic Potential using Multidisciplinary Approaches), which focuses on infections caused by four virus families with epidemic potential in Europe: influenza, hepatitis E, rabies and rabies-related lyssaviruses, and two flaviviruses, Japanese encephalitis virus and West Nile virus.

## References

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2. European Commission (EC). EU funds new research project to respond to unexpected epidemic threats such as *E. coli*. Brussels: EC. 9 Aug 2011. Press release. Available from: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/958&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>