# Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority

## Assess threats and gather intelligence to act fast during health emergencies

### HERA's mission

HERA was created to strengthen Europe's ability to ensure the provision of medical countermeasures in case of a pandemic or other large-scale health threats. This implies identifying possible threats, assessing existing countermeasures, establishing stocks or supporting the development of new countermeasures, as well as making sure that, if needed, we will have the capacity to produce them quickly and at mass.

- Better EU health security coordination in the area of medical countermeasures (MCMs) before and during crises

- Bringing together the EU member states, industry and relevant stakeholders

- Development, production, procurement, stockpiling and equitable distribution of medical countermeasures

- Reinforcing the global health emergency response architecture

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## HERA's key targeted actions:

**1 Prioritisation of threats and medical countermeasures**

HERA carries out analyses to identify high impact threats for which MCM preparedness and response must be improved, and to pinpoint the gaps in terms of availability and accessibility of related medical countermeasures. Furthermore, HERA maps existing MCMs and those in development.

This work is facilitated by studies, including mapping of specific MCMs, focusing on the analysis and mitigation of various threats, including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats (CBRN), environmental health threats due to climate change, and novel hazards and their impact on MCMs.

**2 Systematic threat assessment to inform MCM response**

HERA systematically reviews the notifications and reports delivered by EU and global intelligence systems, in order to rapidly identify which health events call for EU MCM preparedness and response measures. HERA assesses policy alternatives for MCM response, based on EU Agencies' risk assessments and other legitimate factors.

**3 Reinforcing sequencing capacities**

To improve the collection of data on pathogens with high pandemic potential that require MCM response, HERA finances projects to strengthen sequencing capacities in EU Member States. The objective is to consolidate and further expand Member States' capacity to identify and characterise pathogens of concern, and to facilitate the integration of genomics-based methods into routine disease surveillance and outbreak preparedness and response.

*HERA will also support initiatives to enhance sequencing capacities in low- and middle-income countries in collaboration with the African Centre for Disease Control (CDC).*

## Anticipating health threats

Threats are assessed on a regular basis, based on an initial priority exercise conducted in summer 2022, in which HERA established a list of **three priority threat categories** for the EU to prepare against:

1 Pathogens with high pandemic potential

2 Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, associated to their deliberate or accidental release

3 Threats resulting from antimicrobial resistance

Additional threat areas are getting assessed, notably emerging biosecurity threats as well as threats stemming from climate change, e.g. associated with vector-borne diseases, to support the previously identified three main threat categories.

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# 4 Strengthening wastewater surveillance

HERA supports the strengthening of environmental monitoring including wastewater-based surveillance and the establishment of efficient data-sharing mechanisms to ensure relevant information on pathogens with pandemic and/or epidemic potential is widely and regularly available.

- *HERA is steering the process for the creation of a global consortium for wastewater surveillance for public health with the goal of developing a global sentinel system able to provide comprehensive, real-time monitoring in strategic locations that can help identify emerging risks and enable prompt and targeted evidence-based action.*

# 5 Horizon scanning and foresight

HERA carries out horizon scanning and foresight activities to proactively identify emerging innovations and technologies within the MCM field. For instance, HERA finances actions to strengthen multinational efforts for the development of diagnostics and supports the development of innovative diagnostic.

# 6 Supporting epidemic intelligence from open source

In collaboration with the Joint Research Centre and the WHO Hub for pandemic and epidemic intelligence, HERA supports the technical development of the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources platform (EIOS) and represents the Commission in the EIOS coordination group.

## Establishing efficient data-sharing mechanisms

HERA is developing the ATHINA platform to strengthen the link between health threat detection and the availability of relevant medical countermeasures. ATHINA will consist of four different functions allowing to collect information on health threats and MCMs, to assess and prioritise threats in relation to MCMs, to map and simulate potential scenarios, and to allow for an adequate response in case of emergency.

1. Collect information on health threats and MCMs

2. Assess and prioritise threats in relation to MCMs

3. Map and simulate potential scenarios

4. Allow for an adequate response in case of emergency

ATHINA will only be operational if Member States have strong national IT systems that are interoperable with HERA's IT system and other relevant systems. With the EU-HIP project, HERA supports participating countries to enhance and improve national IT systems in an efficient and coordinated manner, with the objective to obtain the needed interoperability with HERA's IT platform.

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