Applicants invited to the second stage should provide details of their clinical studies[243] in the dedicated annex using the template provided in the submission system. As proposals under this topic are expected to include clinical studies, the use of the template is strongly encouraged.

HORIZON-HLTH-2027-01-DISEASE-05: Development of novel small molecule antiviral therapeutics for pathogens with epidemic potential

Call: Cluster 1 - Health (Single stage - 2027/1)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 9.00 and 11.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 44.20 million.
Type of Action	Research and Innovation Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: In recognition of the opening of the US National Institutes of Health's programmes to European researchers, any legal entity established in the United States of America is eligible to receive Union funding. If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
Award criteria	The criteria are described in General Annex D. The following exceptions apply: The thresholds for each criterion will be 4 (Excellence), 4 (Impact) and 4 (Implementation). The cumulative threshold will be 12.
Procedure	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply: To ensure a balanced project portfolio covering the viruses/groups of viruses targeted in this topic[244], grants will be awarded (within available budget) to proposals not only in order of ranking but at least also to those proposals that are the highest ranked within different

243 Please note that the definition of clinical studies (see introduction to this Work Programme part) is broad and it is recommended that you review it thoroughly before submitting your application.

244 Virus/group of viruses i to vi, as given in the scope of this topic.

	viruses/groups of viruses targeted, provided that the proposals attain all thresholds.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply: The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.

Expected Outcome: This topic aims at supporting activities that are enabling or contributing to one or several expected impacts of destination "Tackling diseases and reducing disease burden". To that end, proposals under this topic should aim to deliver results that are directed at, tailored towards and contributing to all the following expected outcomes:

- The scientific and clinical communities have a better understanding of and access to experimental antivirals for the prevention and treatment of emerging or re-emerging viral infections, as well as for further clinical investigation.
- Candidate antiviral therapies are available to treat patients for emerging and re-emerging viral infections, increasing therapeutic options for clinical deployment in case of an epidemic or pandemic.

Scope: Infectious diseases remain a major threat to health and health security in the EU and globally. Viral disease emergence is already being accelerated by climate change, and thus a proactive approach to the development of antiviral prophylactics and therapeutics in preparedness for future infectious disease outbreaks is needed. The availability of antivirals targeting conserved viral or host mechanisms would provide a critical preparedness measure against future health threats caused by (re)emerging infectious disease epidemics or pandemics, due to infectious disease epidemics or pandemics.

This topic contributes to strengthening the Research and Innovation ecosystem within the EU and supports the implementation of the European Medical Countermeasures Strategy[245].

Antibodies and antibody derived proteins are excluded from the scope of this topic.

Applicants should explicitly state in their proposal which of the following viruses/groups of viruses is targeted and the proposed work should address only this specific virus/group of viruses. The proposed work should aim to advance the development of novel or existing antiviral candidates targeting exclusively one of the following viruses/groups of viruses:

i. Junin mammarenavirus and/or Lassa mammarenavirus
ii. Tick-borne encephalitis virus and/or Japanese encephalitis virus

[245] https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-emergency-preparedness-and-response-hera/preparedness/medical-countermeasures-strategy_en

iii. Andes virus and/or Hantaan virus and/or Sin Nombre virus

iv. Hendra virus

v. Enterovirus D68

vi. Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus

Identifying a specific virus/group of viruses does not preclude the exploration of these antiviral candidates' effects on other viruses/groups of viruses. Proposals should thus aim to diversify and accelerate the global prophylactic and therapeutic research and development portfolio for emerging and re-emerging viral infections, and to strengthen the leading role of the EU in prophylactic and therapeutic research and development.

Proposals should address some of the following research areas:

- Discovery and selection of candidate antivirals with consideration for intra-family and/or variant-transcending potential.
- Optimisation of selected candidates to improve potency, selectivity, pharmacokinetics, and developability, using Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR) studies or equivalent methodologies.
- In-vitro characterisation of antiviral activity, mechanism of action, and, where appropriate, resistance potential across multiple viruses or strains.
- In-vivo tests in at least one animal model or, if available in human organoid or organotypic models, to demonstrate the protective function of the antiviral candidates and deemed sufficient for moving to first clinical trials.
- If requested by regulators as pre-requisite for clinical studies, in-vivo tests in a non-human primate model.
- Production of batches of the most promising antiviral candidates according to the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)[246] of the most promising therapeutics solution.
- First in human clinical safety studies demonstrating a clear regulatory pathway for market authorisation. Attention should be paid to critical biological and social factors such as sex, age, ethnicity and disability.

Participation of third countries where viruses addressed in the proposal are endemic or where outbreaks have occurred or are ongoing is encouraged.

246 https://health.ec.europa.eu/medicinal-products/eudralex/eudralex-volume-4_en