

Infectious disease modelling teams invited to strengthen global response to highly pathogenic avian influenza

Applications are now open to enhance epidemic preparedness through collaborative modelling

03 September 2025, TOULOUSE, France – An **international modelling challenge** is calling on experts across disciplines to help tackle one of Europe's — and the world's — most pressing health threats: highly pathogenic avian influenza (**HPAI**). The initiative, which is now open for applications, seeks to improve outbreak modelling readiness and to foster international collaboration among researchers and decision makers from academic, government, and other backgrounds worldwide.

The HPAI Modelling Challenge addresses the urgent need for timely, evidence-based insights that can inform policy decisions during disease outbreaks. With HPAI continuing to pose a significant threat to farmed poultry, wild bird populations, livestock, and human health globally, the challenge provides modelling teams with datasets simulating a real-time outbreak scenario.

"This challenge is a step forward in our collective preparedness against emerging infectious diseases," said **Timothée Vergne**, head of the organising team and Associate Professor of Veterinary Public Health at the National Veterinary School of Toulouse, France. "By bringing together diverse modelling approaches and expertise from around the world, we can strengthen our ability to provide rapid, accurate insights that help protect both animal and human health. The collaborative nature of this initiative ensures that we're not just improving individual capabilities but also building a global network of readiness."

The challenge will distribute practice data sets in January 2026 and kick off formally in February 2026. It will unfold over a three-month intensive challenge phase until April 2026, where participating teams will receive monthly updates of evolving HPAI-like data sets.

This challenge is organised as part of the five-year Horizon Europe research project **WiLiMan-ID** (<https://www.wiliman-id.eu/>), which draws on interdisciplinary approaches to integrate data from pathogen to community levels, providing policymakers with innovative strategies for prevention, surveillance, and control of five infectious diseases which are identified as global threats to both animals and humans.

Modelling teams from academia, public health, the private sector or other backgrounds are warmly invited to participate. Participation is free.

For more information, registration, and to contact the organisers with questions, visit:

<https://www.wiliman-id.eu/modelling-challenge/>

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HPAI Modelling Challenge Coordinators

