

## COVID-19 EU update

### **European Commission:**

- The Commission has presented a [Communication](#) on “*Short-term EU health Preparedness*” to ensure the EU is ready for possible resurgences of COVID-19 cases. The Communication focuses on all necessary actions needed to enhance preparedness, including testing and contact tracing, improved public health surveillance and widened access to medical countermeasures such as personal protective equipment, medicines and medical devices. Actions also include measures on healthcare surge capacity, non-pharmaceutical countermeasures, support to minorities and vulnerable persons, and activities to reduce the burden of seasonal influenza. The Commission also proposes to coordinate equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine, in distributing medicines in a fair manner, and in avoiding the “combined effects of simultaneous outbreaks of COVID-19 colliding with a heavy influenza season,” which “could stretch even further the limits of our healthcare systems.”
- The Commission has adopted an Implementing Decision to support the setting up of a voluntary gateway service to facilitate the interoperability of contact tracing and warning apps. This consists in an interface to efficiently receive and make available relevant pseudonymised information from national contact tracing and warning apps in a secure manner between EU member states deciding to make use of it. This will mean that citizens, in particular those traveling in the EU, will only need to install one app. The design of this service builds on [the Interoperability guidelines, the set of technical specifications](#) agreed between Member States and the Commission, the principles set out in the EU toolbox and the [EU guidelines on data protection for apps](#). So far, 10 apps have been launched and 10 more are expected to become operational in the near future.

### **European Parliament:**

- In a [resolution](#) adopted by 526 votes to 105 and 50 abstentions, the European Parliament has underlined the need to draw lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and engage in far stronger cooperation in the area of health to create a “*European Health Union*”. This should include common minimum standards for quality healthcare, based on stress tests of member states' healthcare systems to identify weaknesses and verify that they are prepared for a possible resurgence of COVID-19. The resolution calls for a European Health Response Mechanism to be created rapidly to respond to all types of health crises through better coordination and management of the strategic reserve of medicines and medical equipment. The new dedicated [EU4Health Programme](#) was strongly welcomed, with stronger European health agencies [ECDC](#) and [EMA](#) as well as joint health research. Parliament has consistently promoted the establishment of a coherent EU public health policy: in a [resolution on the post-2020 EU budget revision and economic recovery plan](#) MEPs urged that a new European health programme should be created. The Commission has since presented a proposal for 9.4 billion EUR [EU4Health](#) programme for 2021-2027 as part of the [Next Generation EU recovery plan](#).
- [The Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee calls for more EU self- sufficiency and better-coordinated strategies to tackle medicine shortages](#). In a report on the shortage of medicines adopted by the ENVI committee, it was stressed the need for an increased EU response, as the problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis across Europe with a direct negative impact on patients' health, safety and the continuation of their treatment.

### **Council:**

- On 14 July, the [Council adopted a regulation which aims to speed up the development and the deployment of a vaccine against COVID-19 in the EU](#). The act provides for a temporary derogation from certain provisions of EU legislation on the deliberate release in the environment and the contained use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It also aims to simplify the procedure for application for marketing authorisation for medicinal products containing or consisting of

GMOs intended to treat or prevent COVID-19. The regulation will apply as long as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic or as long as an implementing act by which the Commission recognises a situation of public health emergency due to COVID-19 applies.

**WHO/WHO-Europe:**

- [Global COVID-19 Clinical Platform: Rapid core case report form \(CRF\)](#): WHO has set up an anonymized clinical data platform with a standardised template for case reports on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections from hospital admission to discharge, transfer, death, or continued hospitalisation. All WHO members are invited to participate and contribute case reports. While there will be strict limits to access, an independent Clinical Advisory Group will analyse the input received; access for government and other parties will be provided in accordance with the provisions of the 2005 International Health Regulations.

**COVID-19 and Human Rights:**

- [Council of Europe: guidance to governments on respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law](#): the guidance is intended to clarify governmental responsibility in times of emergency, such as the pandemic, with regard to derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights, respect for the rule of law and democratic principles, fundamental human rights, and protection from crime and the protection of victims of crime. There is also updated guidance on falsified medicines. The [information document](#) summarises all relevant points.

**Reports from other sources/COVID-19 Webinars:**

- On 8 July, the [Federation of Veterinarians of Europe](#) (FVE) and the [Federation of the European Academies of Medicine](#) (FEAM) hosted a joint webinar entitled 'COVID-19 & One Health: can we do better?'. The webinar featured presentations on the experience of treating coronavirus diseases in animals and the potential of using this knowledge to find a vaccine against COVID-19. It also highlighted the need for better 'One Health' coordination at educational, professional and policy level to respond to zoonotic diseases. All presentations and a recording of the webinar can be found [here](#).