

COVID-19 EU update

European Commission:

- On 25.11.2020 the Commission approved a contract with Moderna to secure access to a potential COVID-19 vaccine. This contract is the sixth contract approved under the EU Vaccines strategy, alongside contracts with AstraZeneca, Sanofi-GSK, Janssen Pharmaceutica NC, BioNTech-Pfizer and CureVac, which were approved earlier this year. The contract with Moderna ensures an initial purchase of 80 million doses on behalf of all EU Member states plus an optional additional 80 million doses once the vaccine has proven to be safe and effective. The press release on this contract can be found [here](#).
- On 21st to 22nd of November, the G20 Summit was held virtually with President Ursula von der Leyen and President Charles Michel representing the EU at the 15th G20 Leaders' Summit. Among the summit's outcomes, a COVID-19 multilateral solution to the pandemic was discussed. EU leaders called on G20 members to uphold and deepen their commitment to the fight against COVID-19 and to ensure affordable and equitable access to diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines for all people. The press release on the G20 summit can be found [here](#).

European Council:

- On 19.11.2020 members of the European Council met in a video conference, the results of which included the agreement to further strengthen the coordination of combating the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the mutual recognition of tests, vaccine deployment and a common approach to lifting restrictive measures. Further results are available [here](#).

Council:

- A video conference of health ministers is scheduled to take place on 02.12.2020. The agenda includes the discussion of the current situation of the pandemic in Europe and the exchange of views, an update by the ECDC on the epidemiological situation in Europe as well as the EU pharmaceutical strategy. Concerning COVID-19 the focus will be on lessons learnt from the pandemic and what conclusions are to be drawn from them in an effort to create a stronger European Union. The "European Health Union package", and the within that contained three legislative proposals, is to be discussed. Further information on the meeting's agenda can be found [here](#).

European Parliament:

- 20.11.2020: The European Parliament has published its third [EU survey](#) on citizens' views on the EU's role in pandemic management. 66% of respondents agree that the EU should have more competences to deal with crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic; an absolute majority continues to call for a larger EU budget to fight COVID-19; 54% say that public health should be a spending priority for the EU budget. Please find the results [here](#).

EMA:

- On 11 December, EMA will hold [public meeting](#) to inform EU citizens about regulatory processes for approval of COVID-19 vaccines and the Agency's role in development, evaluation and approval and safety monitoring.
- [Update on Remdesevir](#): WHO has updated guidelines advising against use of remdesevir in hospitalised patients with COVID-19 regardless of severity of disease, based on recent meta-analysis. According to

WHO, certainty for results is low and evidence did not prove that remdesivir has no benefit. WHO also considered implications on health resources in view for cost and need to be given intravenously.

In the light of the above, EMA requested full solidarity data from WHO and marketing authorisation holder to assess evidence together with other relevant data to see if changes are needed to marketing authorisation of Remdesivir in EU. Concerning safety of the drug, it is well tolerated with similar rate of adverse events for placebo. EMA currently evaluates signal for kidney toxicity.

- HMA/EMA published a [statement on approval of vaccines](#) in which they encouraged marketing authorisation holders of vaccines such as those composed of whole-inactivated virus or live attenuated virus to submit their applications through the centralised procedure in order to ensure that those vaccines reach all Member States at the same time, with no unfair access in the Union. The statement notes that for most COVID-19 vaccines the centralised procedure is mandatory since they are produced by biotechnological processes.
- EMA published [new guidance for developers of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments](#) on where to find the standards and requirements related to pharmaceutical quality that are applicable in the EU.

ECDC:

- ECDC updated its [report on contact tracing](#). public health management of persons, including healthcare workers, who have had contact with COVID-19 cases in the European Union – third update. The report aims to help public health authorities in their tracing and management of persons, including healthcare workers, who have had contact with COVID-19 cases. This document outlines the key steps for contact tracing in the context of the COVID-19 response, including contact identification, advice, and follow-up. The report is available in all EU languages.
- On 28 October 2020, a European Commission Recommendation on COVID-19 testing strategies, including the use of rapid antigen tests was published. That recommendation calls to agree on criteria to be used for the selection of rapid antigen tests, and to share and discuss information regarding the results of validation studies. ECDC released a document with [options for the use of rapid antigen tests for COVID-19](#) that is intended to facilitate further discussions between Member States with the aim of reaching agreement on the criteria to be used for the selection of rapid antigen tests, as well as scenarios and settings during which it is appropriate to use rapid antigen tests. This document is also intended to support clinical validations of rapid antigen tests.
- In May 2020, ECDC produced a set of short-term forecasts of the expected number of COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalised. Updated forecasts were published in September 2020. In this [report](#), the agency presents slightly longer-term projections for each country, up until 25 December 2020.
- ECDC updated [maps](#) in support of the Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO/WHO Europe:

- 19.11.2020: [Joint Statement](#) on Data Protection and Privacy in COVID-19 Response
 - “Mounting evidence demonstrates that the collection, use, sharing and further processing of data can help limit the spread of the virus and aid in accelerating the recovery, especially through digital contact tracing.”
 - Data collection and processing, including digital contact tracing and general health surveillance, may include collection of vast amounts of personal and non-personal sensitive data

- Potentially significant effects beyond initial crisis response phase, if such measures are applied for purposes not directly or specifically for COVID-19 response, potentially leading to infringement of fundamental human rights and freedoms
- Concern particularly pressing, if some emergency measures introduced to address the pandemic, such as tracing apps, are turned into standard practice
- [Health workers at risk, older adults and residents of long-term care facilities to be prioritized for COVID-19 vaccination](#): the WHO's European Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (ETAGE) has issued recommendations on prioritizing population groups for different stages of vaccine availability and for different epidemiological settings, namely either no cases, sporadic or clusters of cases, or community transmission. There is a priority for the most critical essential services, also health professionals are categorized as being very high risk.

OECD:

- [Health at a Glance](#): This year's publication focusses on several issues including the COVID-19 pandemic, including investment in resources, surge capacities and how to build resilience. A blog article outlines '[Resilience of Health Systems to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Europe: Learning from the first wave](#)'.

Webinars/Other Reports:

- The COVID-19 update from the Czech Republic as of 20 November 2020. Please find [here](#).
- S&Ds host a webinar on 'EU Health Union' on Tuesday with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and health ministers from Spain, Italy and Sweden. Prof. Montgomery is speaking on behalf of CPME, see [here](#).