

COVID-19 EU update

European Commission:

- The European Commission [concluded exploratory talks](#) with Valneva on 12.01.2021 to secure possible 60 million doses in total of the new potential vaccine. The Valneva vaccine is currently the only vaccine candidate using the inactivated virus for immunization and would be the 8th vaccine the European Commission has made deals with.
- On 11.01.2021, Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovenia became new [host countries for rescEU medical supplies](#). In addition, a second medical reserve will be hosted by Germany already a rescEU host country. In total, there are now nine countries hosting the common European stockpiles of medical equipment. Supplies now include: more than 65 million medical masks and 15 million FFP2 and FFP3 masks; more than 280 million pairs of medical gloves; close to 20 million medical gowns and aprons; Several thousand oxygen concentrators and ventilators. This common European stock of lifesaving medical equipment is distributed across Europe at times of medical emergencies, for example when national health systems are overwhelmed by coronavirus patients. It has already delivered essential medical supplies to Croatia, Czechia, France, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.
- On 11.01.2021, [the European Commission selected 24 projects](#) (national projects in 14 member states as well as the United Kingdom) to be financed through the [emergency support instrument](#), in their efforts to build new programs, expanding on existing ones, for the collection of plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 to be used for the treatment of current COVID-19 patients. The funds are directed at supporting their purchase of laboratory equipment necessary. The two treatment options using plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 are the transfusion of convalescent plasma to sick patients or the purification of antibodies to make immunoglobulins which are then being used in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. Both approaches are currently still being investigated but have proven to be efficient thus far.

European Parliament:

- On 11.01.2021, Sandra Gallina, Director General of DG Santé, updated the MEPs on the latest developments considering the COVID-19 vaccinations. On 12.01.2021 the [MEPs called for more clarity and transparency regarding the COVID-19 vaccine](#), stating that a lack of transparency has fueled uncertainty and disinformation in Europe. The MEPs stated that they welcomed the Commission's openness to share available information but stated that they believed some questions to be better answered by Member States and pharmaceutical companies directly. Following requests from the MEPs, the Commission provided further information, stating that a reading room would be open for MEPs wishing to review vaccine contracts, with the CureVac contract currently being available for review. They furthermore stated that the largest quantities of vaccines are to be expected during the second quarter of 2021 with specific deployment strategies as well as the prioritization of vaccination groups being set up by each member state. As of next week, there will be a dedicated platform available for Member States to a biweekly report on the number of vaccines received and the number of vaccines that have been administered. The recording of the debate can be accessed [here](#).

European Council:

- On 12.01.2021, the European Council published an [explanatory video](#) on how the COVID-19 vaccines were produced, why a fast production was possible and how safety and quality standards were ensured, explaining the process of development and approval of COVID-19 vaccines.

EMA:

- EMA receives [application for conditional marketing authorisation of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca](#). An opinion on the marketing authorisation could be issued by 29 January during the meeting of EMA's scientific committee for human medicines, provided that the data submitted on the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccine are sufficiently robust and complete and that any additional information required to complete the assessment is promptly submitted.
- Hackers behind EMA attack sought to sow distrust in vaccines: in December, EMA [revealed](#) its systems had been breached and information about the BioNTech/Pfizer coronavirus vaccine was “unlawfully accessed” in the attack. Today, the Agency [informed](#) that the hackers who stole data from EMA manipulated emails before leaking them online in an effort to sow distrust about the EU's approval process for COVID-19 vaccines. The manipulation of emails could undermine public trust in the approval of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine, two vaccines that were approved end-December and early-January and are currently being rolled out across the bloc. As yet the attack has not been attributed.
- EMA recommends the use extra dose in BioNTech/Pfizer vials: EMA has recommended that six doses should be extracted from a single BioNTech/Pfizer coronavirus vaccine vial, rather than the original five. After the vaccine — which is sold as Comirnaty in the EU — was approved by several regulators, health professionals discovered that they could draw enough for a sixth dose despite the formal product information indicating that the vials contained five doses. The EMA is recommending that special syringes — called low dead-volume syringes — are used to ensure that the full six doses can be extracted. However, if there isn't enough vaccine remaining to make up a full sixth dose, the EMA says that the contents must be discarded. Leftover vaccine from several vials should also not be combined to make up an additional dose, it said in a [statement](#).
- EMA [recommended](#) and the Commission [granted](#) a conditional marketing authorization (CMA) for Moderna vaccine to be used for people over the age of 18. In a clinical trial of around 28,000 people, the two-dose mRNA vaccine was 94.1 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 cases, and almost 91 percent effective in preventing severe cases. CMA means that Moderna must provide more information throughout the next two years, including how long immunity lasts and whether the vaccine prevents the transmission of the virus. But the EMA decision means that the vaccine is safe, effective and ready to use. The Commission has already secured 160 million doses of the vaccine, and deliveries will start next week. It is the most expensive vaccine at \$18 a dose, according to a leaked price list from December. In addition to the price, Moderna has limited production capacity in Europe. The company will be able to supply 10 million doses by the end of the first quarter of 2021, 35 million by the second quarter and another 35 million by the third quarter. The additional 80 million doses that the EU secured in December will also be distributed in 2021, but the company did not clarify when that would take place.

ECDC:

- ECDC publishes a [strategic and performance analysis of its response](#) to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an external assessment of the Centres response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the period January - September 2020. This analysis grounds its conclusions and recommendations on a desk research, a comprehensive stakeholder consultation, and a benchmarking and learning exchange with other similar organisations.

WHO/WHO Europe:

- [Health workforce policy and management in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic response](#): This interim technical guidance comments on supporting and protecting health workers, strengthening and optimising health workforce teams, increasing capacity and strategic health worker deployment, and health system human resources strengthening. Its policy recommendations take into account specific needs in relation to gender and age for example.

Webinars/Other Reports:

- [WMA COVID-19 talk](#): The latest interview in WMA's series focuses on vaccination in a dialogue with Prof. Dr Frank Ulrich Montgomery in his role of WMA Chairperson of Council.
- The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies response webinar series returns 19 January at 12 pm CET. Join a discussion on remote consultations and implications for the future of doctor-patient interaction. Register [here](#).
- [European Commission webinar](#) "EU4Health Programme 2021-2027, the vision for a healthier European Union" takes place 22 January 2021, 10:00 – 12:00 CET.