

COVID-19 EU update

European Commission:

- The EU [doubled its contribution](#) to the COVAX facility by 500 million euros on 19 February. The total amount pledged now rests at 1 billion Euros. The Contribution is composed of a new €300 million EU grant followed by €200 million in guarantees by the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus that will back a loan by the European Investment Bank.
- On the 17 February, The EU will invest €150 million for research to counter coronavirus variants through the [HERA incubator](#) program. The HERA European Bio-defense preparedness program aims to ensure (1.) rapid detection of variants (2.) swift adaptation of vaccines (3.) setting up a European Clinical Trials network (4.) Fast-tracking regulatory approval of updated vaccines and of new or repurposed manufacturing infrastructures (5.) enable upscaling of production.

European Parliament:

- On the 25 February, Members of the ENVI and ITRE committees discussed [how to increase capacity and improve delivery of COVID-19 vaccines](#) with pharmaceutical companies and Commissioner Breton and Kyriakides. MEPs asked about global technology transfers, patent sharing and how the industry intends to update the vaccines in order to keep up with emerging variants. Industry representatives talked about the challenges of building production capacity for entirely new and complex products as well as the international nature of existing supply chains.

European Council:

- [Statement of the members of the European Council on COVID-19 and health](#): On 25 February, the heads of state and government took stock of the management of the pandemic and future resilience of health systems. The statement calls to ensure travel restrictions are coordinated and align with the [Council recommendations](#). The coordination of vaccination certificates is ongoing. With a view to building resilience, the European Council requests the Commission to present a report by June 2021 on “information-sharing, coordination, communication and joint public procurement, as well as how to ensure adequate production capacity in the EU and build up strategic reserves while supporting the diversification and resilience of global medical supply chains.” Access to medicines and related logistics and policies remain a key priority.

EMA:

- EMA [issues advice](#) on the use of a first monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19: the EMA’s Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) said REGN-COV2 antibody combination (casirivimab / imdevimab) should be used to treat patients with confirmed COVID-19, who do not require supplemental oxygen and who are at high risk of progressing to severe disease. Unlike a usual assessment, the CHMP’s recommendation comes following a request by EMA Executive Director Emer Cooke to examine two antibody therapies, one from Regeneron/Roche, the other from Eli Lilly. Under this process, EU countries can use the CHMP recommendation to support national advice on the possible use of the antibodies before a marketing authorization is issued, the EMA said. The treatment is being manufactured in Europe by Roche.
- EMA publishes guidance for coronavirus variant vaccines: The European Medicines Agency published [guidance for vaccine manufacturers](#) looking to adapt their vaccines to provide protection against new

coronavirus variants. The guidance assumes that new variant vaccines would rely on the same technology and platform as the original approved vaccine, and that the main change would be in the antigen chosen to set off an immune response. The EMA's human medicines committee has said there won't be the need to submit new large-scale safety and efficacy studies. Instead, immunogenicity studies can be used to indicate the efficacy of the variant vaccine, with the suggestion that researchers need at least one small clinical trial on the vaccine, with people receiving either the new variant vaccine or the original one. The EMA said that manufacturers should also look at the efficacy of a single dose — a so-called booster — to people who have had the original vaccine. The immune response elicited by this shot should be compared with that shown in the original trial done for the first approval of the vaccine.

- EMA starts rolling review of Celltrion antibody regdanvimab for COVID-19: The European Medicines Agency has [started a review](#) of the monoclonal antibody regdanvimab, developed by South Korean pharmaceutical company Celltrion for the treatment of coronavirus infections. The EMA said that the decision to begin the review is based on the results of an ongoing study, but “it is too early to draw any conclusions” as of yet. The EMA has already started assessing antibody drugs developed by U.S. drugmakers Eli Lilly and Regeneron.

ECDC

- SARS-CoV-2 in mink: recommendations to improve monitoring: [the report](#), compiled by ECDC and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) proposes options for monitoring strategies that will help to prevent and control spread of the disease. It concludes that all mink farms should be considered at risk from SARS-CoV-2 and that monitoring should include active measures such as testing of animals and staff in addition to passive surveillance by farmers and veterinarians.

WHO-Europe:

- [In the wake of the pandemic: preparing for Long COVID](#): The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies has published a policy brief on how to adjust systems to patients suffering from Long COVID in terms of health, return to work and psycho-social impact.

OECD:

- [Using trade to fight COVID-19: Manufacturing and distributing vaccines](#): This analysis highlights the opportunities and barriers presented by international trade as regards the drug discovery process, mass production, distribution and administration, and reverse logistics (e.g. cooling of vaccines). Key recommendations include ensuring specific air cargo capacity, reducing tariffs, streamlining non-tariff measures to avoid duplication for example, avoiding export bans and enabling transparent communication across the whole value chain.

Other reports/webinars:

- [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#): this online tool offers an assessment of the stringency of government's pandemic policies, based on indicators including containment and closure policies, such as school closures and restrictions in movement; economic policies, such as income support to citizens or provision of foreign aid, and health system policies such as the COVID-19 testing regime, emergency investments into healthcare and most recently, vaccination policies. A score is

awarded for the degree of intervention, however this does not make any statement as to the effectiveness of governments' action.