European Commission

- On the 14th of June, the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission attended the official signing ceremony for the Regulation on the EU Digital COVID Certificate marking the end of the legislative process.

Council of the EU

- The Council has adopted its position the changes to the EMA mandate. The position seems to be close the Commission proposal, e.g. the Council supports extending EMA’s mandate to monitoring medical devices, but does not reflect many of the improvements which CPME suggested, i.e. improved involvement of health professionals, sanctions for marketing authorisation holders who do not comply with reporting obligations. The text will form the basis for discussions with the European Commission and the Parliament.
- On the 14th of June, Council adopted a recommendation amending the recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new recommendation includes two additional criteria needing to be considered when decided whether to restrict free movement: Vaccination uptake and prevalence of COVID-19 variants of concern. An emergency brake mechanism is also included which allows countries to reinstate their own travel measures if the epidemiological situation rapidly deteriorates or where there is a high prevalence of variants of concern.
- Leaders of the G7 discussed the pandemic during the Summit in Cornwall, UK. Leaders set a collective goal of ending the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, requiring the vaccination of at least 60% of the world’s population. The G7 is committed to providing one billion vaccine doses over the next year through the COVAX program, with doses distributed towards those in greatest need.

EMA

- EMA advises against the use of Vaxzevria (Astrazeneca COVID-19 vaccine) in people with history of capillary leak syndrome. EMA’s safety committee carried out a review of 6 cases of capillary leak syndrome in people who had received Vaxzevria. The safety committee concluded that people who have previously had capillary leak syndrome must not be vaccinated with Vaxzevria.
- EMA publishes paediatric investigation plans for several COVID-19 treatments and a vaccine under development.
- EMA and national authorities are aware that a batch of the active substance for COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen had been contaminated with materials for another vaccine manufactured at the same site. Based on available information, batches of the vaccine released in the EU are not affected by the cross contamination. However, as a precaution and to safeguard the quality of vaccines, the supervisory authorities have recommended not releasing vaccine batches containing the active substance made at around the same time that the contamination occurred.

ECDC

- ECDC and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) updates their joint Aviation Health Safety Protocol providing clear operational guidance and risk-based recommendations for health-safe air travel to complement the European Union’s initiatives, such as the EU Digital COVID Certificates. The protocol takes into account new evidence and information such as the circulation of variants of concern and the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination programmes. The protocol is intended to provide support to national authorities in Member States and to aviation stakeholders.
• ECDC provides an updated overview of the progress of national COVID-19 vaccination strategies in the EU, including updates on: vaccine uptake overall and by target group; current vaccination phases and priority groups, as well as any adjustments made to priority groups during the rollout; vaccination strategies and policies in place; and the use of vaccination certificates and challenges countries face with the rollout and good practices to mitigate these challenges.

WHO-Europe
• Primary Health Care Country Vignettes: WHO-Europe is launching a series of vignettes with testimonials from practitioners and policy-makers on how primary healthcare systems have coped with and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to identifying which changes may last beyond the current situation.
• WHO initiative to engage and empower civil society organizations in health emergency responses: WHO-Europe has launched a series of pilot projects on how to better engage with civil society in pandemic management. Initiatives focus i.a. on the working conditions of health professionals as well as access to healthcare for vulnerable groups. Civil society organisations in Greece, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Israel, Georgia, and Slovenia are participating in a variety of projects which will end in December 2021. Engagement with civil society is also the topic of the next webinar in the ‘Build back better’ series taking place on 22 June, 12.00h (Brussels time) hosted by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, registration is available here.

Other reports/webinars
• The Lancet has published an editorial on Protecting refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic, which outlines i.a. policies on vaccination and the challenges that still exist.