COVID-19 EU update

European Commission

- Following the adoption of the EU therapeutics strategy, the European Commission is organizing an EU matchmaking event on COVID-19 therapeutics on 12-13 July 2021. The objectives of the event are to accelerate and upscale COVID-19 therapeutics development and production as well as to connect companies and organizations to assist in production planning.

- On the 15th of June, the European Commission presented a communication on the early lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 18 months. The communication outlines 10 lessons learned on what needs to be improved and what can be done in the future. Among the lessons learned, the Commission recommends that the EU should lead efforts to design a new global surveillance system based on comparable data, the appointment of a European Chief Epidemiologist, and the swift adoption of the European Health Union legislative package.

European Council

- The European Council released its conclusions on COVID-19 and migration on 24 June. The heads of state and government welcome the progress in vaccination effort and general improvement of the epidemiological situation. They underline the continued need to strengthen vaccination efforts and for efforts to be coordinated with the epidemiological situation. They stated that the EU Digital COVID Certificate and revision of Council Recommendations on travels will facilitate safe travel.

- The European Council underlines the EU commitment to international solidarity during the pandemic, stating that the ongoing efforts to boost vaccination production and access globally should be continues and that all producing countries and manufacturers should contribute actively to increase a global vaccine supply. The European Council furthermore welcomes the decision adopted by the 74th WHA to set up sessions of the AWHA in November of this year, focused on a Framework Convention on Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

Council of the EU

- The Council of the EU adopted conclusions on the role of Intellectual Property in tackling COVID-19 on the 18th of June. Ministers consider close cooperation among all relevant public and private actors crucial for rapidly increasing production capacities and worldwide supply of COVID-19 vaccines. Voluntary solutions for the sharing of IP, know-how and data is seen as a promising way to ensure worldwide access to critical products for diagnosing, treating and preventing COVID-19.

- The Council of the EU updated the list of countries, regions and territories for which travel restrictions should be lifted. Member States should gradually lift the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of the following third countries: Albania, Australia, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, New Zealand, Republic of North Macedonia, Rwanda, Serbia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States.

EMA

- EMA approves 2 new additional manufacturing sites for BioNTech/Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty). A new site will start production in Reinbek, Germany and is operated by Allegropharma GmbH & Co.KG and an additional site will also start production in Stein, Switzerland and is operated by Novartis Pharma.

- EMA has approves an additional manufacturing site for the production of COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen. The site, located in Anagni, Italy, is operated by Catalent Anagni SRL. The site will perform
finished product manufacturing. This recommendation does not require a European Commission decision and the site can become operational immediately.

ECDC

- **Threat Assessment Brief: Implications for the EU/EEA on the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 Delta (B.1.617.2) variant of concern**: The brief confirms the need for continued non-pharmaceutical measures alongside continued roll-out of vaccinations to manage the spread of the Delta variant.
- **Infographic: COVID-19 vaccination in the EU/EEA**: The infographic shows vaccination rates among different priority groups. Among the 16 countries reporting, the median rate of full vaccination among health professions is almost 75%.

OECDOECD

- **OECD initiative for safe international mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic (including blueprint)**: The ministers of OECD countries have endorsed the setting up a temporary cross-sectoral forum for knowledge sharing about safe international travel, complimented with a blueprint of guidelines on safe travel behaviour and circumstances.

WHO/Europe

- **WHO/Europe** WHO publishes a Q&A on keeping others safe from COVID-19 during Summer, stating that, although the roll-out of vaccines is promising in terms of reduced hospitalizations and deaths and pressure on health care system, COVID-19 is still spreading with highly transmissible variants of concern becoming more widespread. Every person should assess their own risks to COVID-19 in situations which they might find themselves and keep in mind that travelling is not yet risk free.

Other reports/webinars

- On the 18th of June, the Court of First Instance of Brussels decided to grant interim measures in the case brought against AstraZeneca by the European Commission and the 27 EU Member States. The court has ordered AstraZeneca to deliver 50 million doses of vaccine by the 27th of September according to a binding schedule. If it fails to comply, it will face financial penalties. The court found that AstraZeneca fell short of its best effort obligation to deliver according to contract by leaving potential manufacturing sites underused.