

## Meeting of the EU scientific advice platform on COVID-19

### Meeting Report

Wednesday 02/02/2022 at 17:00

#### 1. COVID-19 Epidemiological update

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ECDC updated on the current situation. The overall epidemiological situation in the EU/EEA is characterised by an unprecedented rise in cases mainly among age groups below 25 years of age. Despite the surge in cases, death rates have remained stable in the region. The agency indicated that Omicron was now dominant in the EU/EEA with an increasing trend of Omicron's BA.2 sub-lineage in several member states. ECDC indicated that emerging evidence from Denmark and the United Kingdom suggested that BA.2 demonstrated higher transmissibility. The agency stressed that conclusions on BA.2 severity and immune escape potential were still pending.

Experts exchanged on the situation in their country and the developments related to the Omicron wave. Several participants reported a decreasing trend in ICU occupancy and hospital admissions. Most experts stressed an increasing number of people admitted to hospitals with and not for Covid-19. They also observed milder Covid-19 diseases. While some participants mentioned that the peak of the Omicron wave had been reached, others indicated that the spread of the BA.2 sub-lineage may prolong the high incidence of the Omicron variant in certain member states. Overall, experts reported the pressure caused by the surge in Covid-19 cases on tracing and testing capacities. The Portuguese and Swedish representatives reported difficulties to cope with the demand in tests and self-tests. Participants called for a revision of contact tracing and surveillance strategies and welcomed further guidance from ECDC on this issue. The French representative also emphasized Omicron's impact on the pace of the vaccination campaign.

In addition, several participants underlined the spread of pandemic fatigue among European citizens and updated on the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in their countries. In light of this situation, ECDC stressed the need to launch the discussion on the transition towards the post-acute phase of the pandemic. The agency acknowledged that adaptations will be needed in terms of surveillance and contact tracing strategies as well as public health and social measures. Despite the diversity of situations in the EU/EEA, ECDC recalled the importance for coordination and consensus between member states on the way forward.

#### 2. COVID-19 – Vaccines and therapeutics

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EMA updated participants on global regulators' agreement regarding the type and characteristics of clinical trials to be conducted for the development of new variant-adapted vaccines. The agency informed participants that Pfizer/BioNTech was working on the development of a monovalent variant-adapted vaccine and Moderna on a bivalent variant-

adapted vaccines. EMA asked for member states views and inputs on the nature of variant-adapted vaccines that should be developed.

The agency informed participants on upcoming guidance updates that will be published regarding heterologous vaccination, boosters and boosters for adolescents. EMA stressed that additional safety data were needed to assess the administration of Comirnaty boosters to adolescents. The agency indicated that it was in close contact with Pfizer/BioNTech and Israeli and American authorities to gather these data.

EMA also recalled the authorisation of Pfizer’s oral antiviral Paxlovid on 27 January.

### **3. AOB**

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The next meeting is scheduled on 16 February 2022 at 16:00 hours.

## **Participation**

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### Member States participants:

1. Professor Markus MÜLLER (Austria)
2. Professor Steven VAN GUCHT (Belgium)
3. Professor Alemka MARKOTIC (Croatia)
4. Dr Zoe PANA (Cyprus)
5. Professor Helene PROBST (Denmark)
6. Professor Irja LUTSAR (Estonia)
7. Professor Toivo MAIMETS (Estonia)
8. Professor Taneli PUUMALAINEN (Finland)
9. Professor Arnaud FONTANET (FRANCE)
10. Dr Véronique HÉON-KLIN (Germany)
11. Mr Miklós SZOCSKA (Hungary)
12. Dr Darina O’FLANAGAN (Ireland)
13. Professor Silvio BRUSAFERRO (Italy)
14. Professor Uga DUMPIS (Latvia)
15. Dr Charles MALLIA-AZZOPARDI (MALTA)
16. Professor Aura TIMEN (The Netherlands)
17. Professor Andrzej HORBAN (Poland)
18. Professor Henrique Barros (Portugal)
19. Professor Diana PAUN (Romania)
20. Professor Pavol JARCUSKA (Slovakia)
21. Mr Milan KREK (Slovenia)
22. Professor Fernando SIMÓN (Spain)
23. Dr Anders TEGNELL (Sweden)

### European Commission:

24. Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner (Chair)
25. Professor Peter Piot, Special Advisor to EU Commission President
26. Anna Carnegie, Policy Advisor to Prof. Piot
27. Sandra Gallina, Director General, DG SANTE
28. Pierre Delsaux, Director General, HERA
29. Giorgos Rossides, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
30. Roberto Reig Rodrigo, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
31. Ralf Kuhne, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
32. Daphne Von Buxhoeveden, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
33. Karolina Herbout – Borczak, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
34. Panayiotis Pourgourides, Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
35. Tove Ernst, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides

36. Ines Prainsack, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
37. Chrystalla Papanastasiou-Constantinou, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
38. John F. Ryan, Director Public Health, DG SANTE
39. Antoine Corporandy, Trainee – Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
40. Maria Antoniou, Trainee – Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
41. Thomas Van Cangh, Policy Assistant to the Director General, DG SANTE
42. Cristina Modoran, Policy Assistant to the Director General, DG SANTE
43. Peter Wagner, Secretariat General
44. Nicolas Pradalie, Secretariat General
45. Hanna Herzig, HERA

ECDC:

46. Andrea Ammon, Director

EMA:

47. Emer Cooke, Executive Director
48. Marco Cavaleri, Head of the office Anti-infectives and Vaccines