

## **European Commission’s advisory panel on COVID-19**

### **Report – videoconference Thursday 26/11/2020 at 19:00**

The President outlined the latest European Council discussions on COVID-19. The Commission is preparing a strategy with advice to Member States on how to handle the winter. It will be adopted on 2/12. A Communication on the gradual lifting of containment measures will be prepared in January.

#### **1. An EU strategy for continued control measures of COVID-19**

The Panel agreed on the need to maintain control measures during the coming month. The epidemiological situation is such that relaxation of measures is not advisable due to how quickly numbers would increase.

The experts suggested balancing optimism with uncertainty regarding vaccines. While promising results have been published, it is still too early to consider these vaccines as a solution for the pandemic. Similarly, the group advised to limit events or activities with high “spreading” potential.

As before, the Panel stressed the importance of clear communication with the public to increase compliance with measures.

The identification of epidemiological thresholds was mentioned as an interesting issue to be explored in the future. The Panel cautioned that it is important to adapt measures to the epidemiological situation (including at local and regional level).

The role of children and schools in the transmission of the virus was discussed. It was concluded that further information is needed but, for now, the reopening of schools does not seem to have contributed significantly to the overall transmission levels.

Regarding rapid antigen tests, the ECDC confirmed it is working on an update of the case definition for COVID-19 (it currently only includes PCR results).

The Panel concluded by confirming this would be a different type of festive end of the year period.

The situation on infection of minks and related risks was briefly reviewed.

**Participants in the audioconference:**

- European Commission: President von der Leyen, Commissioner Kyriakides, K. Vanderberghe, A. Whelan, J. Bray, G. Rossides, R. Reig Rodrigo, S. Gallina, I. Juhansone,
- Peter Piot (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Marion Koopman (Erasmus MC)
- Christian Drosten (Charité)
- Kåre Mølbak (Statens Serum Institute)
- Fernando Simon (Coordination Centre for Health Alerts and Emergencies, Spain)
- Miklos Szocska (Director of The Health Services Management Training Centre of the Semmelweis University)
- Maria Capobianchi (National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome)

**Observers:**

- Andrea Ammon (ECDC Director)

**Excused:**

- Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)
- Arnaud Fontenot (Institut Pasteur)