

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

### Meeting Report

Wednesday 02/03/2022 at 15:45

#### 1. Ukraine – latest developments and health needs

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Referring to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Commissioner Kyriakides provided a brief overview of the humanitarian aid and health support provided by the EU, which had been quickly mobilised. The importance of monitoring the situation in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries (Hungary (HU), Republic of Moldova, Poland (PL), Slovakia (SK), Romania (RO)) was emphasised, because outbreaks of infectious diseases, particularly of respiratory infections, including influenza, COVID-19 and tuberculosis, may occur as more displaced people congregate at the borders.

Andrea Ammon, ECDC, reported that so far no 'overcrowded situations' were faced in the neighbouring countries because most displaced persons were dispersing into communities. However, with the arrival of an increasing number of people it is important to be aware of their vulnerability to infectious diseases, in particular as they are fleeing Ukraine in the middle of the pandemic. ECDC announced the publication of guidance on the prevention and control of infectious diseases in the context of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, during the coming days ([ECDC guidance](#)). ECDC is working closely with the countries that are receiving displaced persons from Ukraine, in collaboration with the European Commission, Member States, WHO, and other international partners. ECDC will continue to closely monitor the situation through epidemic intelligence activities and stands ready to provide specific support, including through staff deployments in the field.

Experts from the four neighbouring Member States (HU, PL, SK, RO) reported on the situation in their country and the numerous measures taken to shelter and care for refugees from Ukraine, most of them being women, children and older people. Many refugees were staying with relatives or were just transiting. Expert reported that priority infectious diseases requiring specific attention included COVID-19, common children diseases (e.g. poliomyelitis, measles, tetanus, and diphtheria), AIDS and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.

Experts also informed that in general refugees with chronic diseases often have medication for only a few days with them so that medication for all types of diseases is needed to ensure continuity of treatments. In addition, a large number of refugees is expected to experience post-traumatic stress syndrome. The need to continue pandemic management, including access to COVID vaccination, as well as to provide the necessary healthcare was emphasised.

Commissioner Kyriakides asked the experts to immediately share the identified needs with the Health Security Committee, which will communicate it to the Union Civil

Protection Mechanism. Director-General Sandra Gallina informed that patients can also be evacuated to Member States with capacities of hospital beds, including for cancer treatment. Requests concerning the transfer of patients or for medication should be communicated through the early warning and response system. Needs for vaccines should be addressed to the Health Emergency and Response Authority. It was also reported that some patients from Ukraine were taking medication which is not authorised in the EU. Emer Cooke informed that EMA plans to get in touch with health authorities in Ukraine to identify the best EU approved alternatives.

## **2. COVID-19 Epidemiological update**

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Dr Charles Mallia Azzopardi presented his reflections on how to prepare for the autumn/winter season in terms of public communication COVID-19. These included the cooperation with health care workers as ambassadors for important health messages, the need to ensure that politicians and clinicians speak with one voice and paying special attention to social media. The approach suggested by Dr Mallia Azzopardi was widely supported by the other experts of the scientific advice platform.

ECDC presented qualitative long-term scenarios for the further development of COVID-19 and the transition to a post-acute phase, including the main factors influencing the trajectory of the pandemic. To be better prepared for the range of different scenarios, it is key to learn the lessons from the pandemic and to take preparatory action now, including the strengthening of health systems and capacity building. It is equally important to strengthen collaboration between countries and international coordination towards improved health security at European and global level. It was agreed to discuss the presentation during the next meeting.

## **3. COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics**

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EMA updated on ongoing activities in the field of vaccines and therapeutics. The work on modified vaccines is continuing. The requirements and data expected from manufacturers in view of regulatory approvals of second generation vaccines have been agreed with international regulators. As there is no conclusive evidence on the advantages of multivalent vaccines yet, EMA recommends to continue studies both with mono- and multivalent vaccines. The Commission decision on the administration of boosters to 12 – 17 year old adolescents has been adopted. On 24 February, EMA's human medicines committee recommended granting an extension of indication for the vaccine Spikevax to include the use in children aged 6 to 11. The rolling reviews of the vaccine candidates by Valneva (VLA2001) and Sanofi/ GSK (Vidprevtyn) continue. On therapeutics, EMA updated on the antivirals molnupiravir and evusheld, a combination of two monoclonal antibodies.

## **4. AOB**

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The next meeting is scheduled on 15 March at 14:00 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 Toivo MAIMETS (Estonia)
6. Dr Véronique HÉON-KLIN (Germany)
7. Professor Sotiris TSIODRAS (Greece)
8. Mr Miklós SZOCSKA (Hungary)
9. Dr Darina O’FLANAGAN/Dr Ronan GLYNN (Ireland)
10. Professor Silvio BRUSAFERRO (Italy)
11. Professor Uga DUMPIS (Latvia)
12. Professor Edita SUZIEDELIENE (Lithuania)
13. Professor Jean-Claude SCHMIT (Luxembourg)
14. Dr Charles MALLIA-AZZOPARDI (Malta)
15. Professor Jaap van DISSEL (The Netherlands)
16. Professor Andrzej HORBAN (Poland)
17. Professor Henrique Barros (Portugal)
18. Professor Diana PAUN (Romania)
19. Professor Pavol JARCUSKA (Slovakia)
20. Mr Milan KREK (Slovenia)
21. Professor Anders TEGNELL (Sweden)

### European Commission:

22. Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner (Chair)
23. Professor Peter Piot, Special Advisor to EU Commission President
24. Sandra Gallina, Director General, DG SANTE
25. Pierre Delsaux, Director General, HERA
26. Giorgos Rossides, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
27. Annukka Ojala, Deputy Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
28. Kurt Vandenberghe, Member of Cabinet, President office
29. Maria Luisa Llano Cardenal, Cabinet Expert, Vice-President Schinas
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. Ines Prainsack, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
34. Karolina Herbout – Borczak, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
35. Tove Ernst, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
36. Chrystalla Papanastasiou-Constantinou, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides

37. Sarah Curran, Policy Assistant to Prof. Piot
38. Wolfgang Philipp, Deputy Head, HERA
39. Cristina Modoran, Policy Assistant to the Director General, DG SANTE
40. Clement Williamson, Policy Assistant to the Director General, HERA
41. Sigrid Weiland, Policy Officer, Strategy and Coordination Unit, DG SANTE
42. Nicolas Pradalie, Secretariat General
43. Hanna Herzig, HERA
44. Anne Auffret, HERA
45. Georgios Pepios, Trainee – Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides

ECDC:

46. Andrea Ammon, Director

EMA:

47. Emer Cooke, Executive Director
48. Marco Cavaleri