

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

### Meeting Report

Monday 18/07/2022 at 16:00

#### 1. COVID-19 – Epidemiological, vaccination and therapeutics update

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ECDC updated participants on the epidemiological situation, with an increase in cases recorded in all age groups, led by the Omicron BA.5 sub variant and pointing towards the beginning of a new wave. ECDC underlined the importance of regularly reporting adequate data from the Member States. They informed participants that, in view of this new wave and in order to ensure preparedness for the autumn, ECDC published two new documents – one on [vaccination strategies](#) and one on [surveillance](#). ECDC stressed that there was only a limited increase in vaccine uptake since December 2021, underscoring the importance of a cohesive vaccination and communication campaign in fall. At the same time it is crucial to reiterate the importance of vaccinating vulnerable groups now, as the impact of vaccination is highest in the early stages of a new wave. Moreover, they shared that the sub variant BA.2.75 has been recognized as a variant of interest (VOI) due to an overall increase in case notifications that may hint to higher transmissibility. Nonetheless, experts stressed that the circulation of this VOI in the EU remains limited and that more data is needed to assess its transmissibility, severity and immune evasion.

Professor Piot seconded the importance of cohesive communication and preparedness with regards to vaccination. The expert from Belgium also called for improved communication on the potential reintroduction of non-medical countermeasures such as masks and for collecting robust data on the protection offered by vaccines against long COVID. Professor Piot, Commissioner Kyriakides, HERA and Poland expressed their support for strong and cohesive communication on vaccines at European level, while Commissioner Kyriakides and EMA in particular welcomed the call for a better characterisation of long COVID and for more robust data collection on the potential role of vaccines in preventing the development of this condition.

On vaccines, EMA informed that both Moderna's and Pfizer's BA.1-adapted bivalent vaccines may be authorised in September, provided there is a positive assessment by the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use. Discussions are ongoing on the body of evidence for the BA.4 and BA.5 adapted bivalent vaccines, with potential approval in autumn. HERA updated participants on ongoing discussions with companies, informing that, pending EMA authorisation, Moderna, Pfizer and Sanofi should be able to deliver to Member States bivalent vaccines based on the original strain plus the Omicron BA.1 variant already in September.

Commissioner Kyriakides welcomed the progress made since the previous meeting, noting that the Platform is successfully building a shared vision for the next steps in the European response to the pandemic.

## **2. Monkeypox – State of play Update by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)**

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Commissioner Kyriakides shared that notification rates have seen weekly increases in Europe, and that progress has been made in the procurement and delivery of monkeypox vaccines to Member States.

ECDC updated participants on the epidemiological situation in those EU countries that are witnessing a higher spread such as Spain, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Portugal. They explained that so far genome sequencing does not indicate significant genomic diversification of the virus. In addition, ECDC informed that their experts are sharing information and supporting effective risk communication from stakeholders such as community organisations and dating apps, while publishing a weekly [Joint ECDC-WHO/Europe Monkeypox Surveillance Bulletin](#) and continuously updating the Laboratory Network Directory so as to ensure cross-country cooperation for diagnostic capacity.

On vaccination strategies for monkeypox, ECDC called for the implementation of vaccination programmes based on collaborative research, and for the establishment of common clinical trial protocols to build a more robust evidence base. ECDC highlighted that the vaccination strategy should also take account of the availability of vaccines. EMA also reiterated the importance of collecting further evidence on the pre- and post-exposure effectiveness of vaccines necessitating adequate research funding. In this context, Commissioner Kyriakides informed participants that the Regulation on Serious Cross-border Threats to Health, for which a provisional agreement has recently been reached, would enable the declaration of a public health emergency at EU level based on the advice of an independent advisory committee.

## **3. Conclusions and suggestions for future agenda points**

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The next meeting is scheduled on Thursday 8 September (16h30-18h00), and will focus on the future COVID-19 vaccines. In view of the next meeting Commissioner Kyriakides invited participants to gather information and provide updates on emerging data regarding long COVID.

## Participation

### Member States participants:

1. Professor Steven VAN GUCHT (Belgium)
2. Professor Alemka MARKOTIĆ (Croatia)
3. Dr Zoe PANA (Cyprus)
4. Professor Toivo MAIMETS (Estonia)
5. Professor Taneli PUUMALAINEN (Finland)
6. Dr. Lena FRIEDRICH (Germany)
7. Professor Sotiris TSIODRAS (Greece)
8. Professor Miklós SZÓCSKA (Hungary)
9. Professor Silvio BRUSAFERRO (Italy)
10. Professor Edita SUŽIEDĖLIENĖ (Lithuania)
11. Professor Uga DUMPIS (Latvia)
12. Professor Andrzej HORBAN (Poland)
13. Professor Diana PAUN (Romania)
14. Professor Pavol JARCUSKA (Slovak Republic)
15. Professor Anders TEGNELL (Sweden)

### European Commission:

16. Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner (Chair)
17. Professor Peter Piot, Special Advisor to EU Commission President
18. Sandra Gallina, Director General, DG SANTE
19. Pierre Delsaux, Director General, HERA
20. John F. Ryan – Deputy Director General, DG SANTE
21. Giorgos Rossides, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
22. Roberto Reig Rodrigo, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
23. Maria-Luisa Llano-Cardenal, Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of VP Schinas
24. Karolina Herbout-Borczak, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
25. Thomas Van Cangh, Policy Assistant to the Director General, DG SANTE
26. Cristina Modoran, Policy Assistant to the Director General, DG SANTE
27. Sigrid Weiland, Policy Officer – Strategy and Coordination Unit, DG SANTE
28. Anne Auffret, Policy Assistant to Director General, HERA
29. Hannah Herzig, HERA
30. Nicolas Pradalie, Secretariat General
31. Sara Bertucci, Trainee – Strategy and Coordination Unit, DG SANTE

### ECDC:

32. Andrea Ammon, Director

### EMA:

33. Emer Cooke – Executive Director
34. Marco Cavaleri, Head of the office Anti-infectives and Vaccines