

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

### Meeting Report

Thursday 10/06/2021 at 17:00

#### 1. COVID-19 Epidemiological update

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Commissioner Kyriakides opened the meeting by presenting the improving epidemiological situation in the EU. It is crucial however to remain vigilant, notably regarding variants, considering the high level of uncertainty that they represent. This is no time for complacency and complete vaccination remains very important. Commissioner Kyriakides will be visiting Member States in the coming weeks to support vaccination campaigns on the ground.

Prof. Piot presented the current situation as a transition phase. Decisions taken now are likely to have an impact on the rest of the year.

ECDC provided a further detailed epidemiological update. Cases, hospitalisations and deaths notifications have been decreasing for over 2 months. The level of case notifications is back to where it was eight months ago. While these are encouraging signs, focus must remain on vaccination rollout. A certain level of non-pharmaceutical interventions will also need to be maintained until a sufficient vaccination coverage is reached.

Vaccination rollout is progressing steadily. Around 50% of the adult population received at least one dose of vaccine. A quarter of the adult EU population has been fully vaccinated.

The situation regarding SARS-CoV-2 variants is monitored on a daily basis, through sequencing reports from Member States and via platforms such as [GISAID](#). The Alpha variant is the dominant variant in the EU (over 90% of sequenced samples). The Beta variant represents 0.5% of sequenced samples, and the Delta variant 0.3% in EU. Particular attention is being given to the Delta variant, which has been progressively replacing Alpha in the UK over the past weeks.

ECDC also informed about an outbreak with the Delta variant in a hospital in Southern Finland. This outbreak, now under control, has resulted in nearly 100 infections (56 patients and 42 staff) and, directly or indirectly, 17 deaths among patients. It illustrates the potential of this variant. Of the infected patients, 40 (71%) had received one dose and two patients (4%), including one of the deceased patients, had received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine while the rest were unvaccinated. This event indicates the importance of full vaccination and avoiding unnecessary long dose interval. Prof Piot also mentioned the need for targeted interventions, including vaccination, intensive testing and tracing, in socially vulnerable populations living in poor, high-density housing conditions.

Experts exchanged on the epidemiological situation, notably regarding investigations of outbreaks involving variants and ongoing work to better understand their transmissibility, immune escape potential, severity of infection. Described patterns were overall similar across countries. Experts also discussed ongoing vaccination campaigns in their country and touched upon preparations in view of the summer tourism season.

## **2. COVID-19 vaccination – State of play**

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EMA provided an update on authorised vaccines. The Comirnaty (Pfizer/BioNTech) vaccine was authorised for adolescents (12-15 year old) on 27 May. Moderna has submitted an application this week to extend the use of its vaccine to adolescents. The review of this application is expected to be completed in July. EMA also updated the platform on the status of the four vaccines that are currently under Rolling Review (CureVac, Novavax, Sputnik, CoronaVac).

Work is also ongoing to increase supply. The authorisation of additional manufacturing capacity will allow significant increases in the production of additional doses of Comirnaty and Moderna. EMA also informed on quality issues with the Janssen vaccine in the US, likely to affect significantly deliveries to Europe.

Enhanced pharmacovigilance activities are ongoing on a permanent basis. EMA continues to monitor suspected cases of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) following vaccination with Vaxzevria and COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen. Numbers appear to remain stable. EMA published [guidance](#) on treatments for TTS this week. The Pharmacovigilance and Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) is meeting this week to evaluate cases of myocarditis and pericarditis in all authorised vaccines. Most of the cases appear to be mild and resolved within a few days. However, numbers are very low and more analysis is required before conclusions can be drawn. EMA is also reviewing cases of capillary leak syndrome (CLS) following vaccination with Vaxzevria, and will be introducing a warning for people who previously had CLS not to be vaccinated with that vaccine.

EMA is also compiling and reviewing the developing evidence from several ongoing studies on heterologous schemes (so-called ‘mix and match’), using different dose intervals.

Experts also touched upon a range of questions, such as the possible need for boosters over time, in particular for people whose immunity decreases faster, the possibility of linking such boosters with seasonal influenza vaccination, as well as the national approaches towards vaccinating children and adolescents.

Commissioner Kyriakides concluded the meeting by recalling the recent signature of a contract with Pfizer/BioNTech for up to 1.8 billion doses between 2021 and 2023. This contract includes provisions on the supply of possible variant-adapted vaccines. This will not be the only contract, and the EU will continue to pursue a portfolio approach.

## **3. AOB**

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The next call is scheduled for 24 June 2021 at 17:00.

## Participation

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### Platform participants:

1. Professor Steven VAN GUCHT (Belgium)
2. Professor Alemka MARKOTIC (Croatia)
3. Dr Zoe PANA (Cyprus)
4. Professor Irja LUTSAR (Estonia)
5. Professor Taneli PUUMALAINEN (Finland)
6. Dr. Hans-Ulrich HOLTHERM (Germany)
7. Dr Sotiris Tsiodras (Greece)
8. Mr Miklós SZOCSKA (Hungary)
9. Professor Silvio BRUSAFERRO (Italy)
10. Professor Uga DUMPIS (Latvia)
11. Professor Edita SUŽIÉDELIENĖ (Lithuania)
12. Professor Andrzej HORBAN (Poland)
13. Professor Henrique DE BARROS (Portugal)
14. Professor Diana Loreta PAUN (Romania)
15. Mr Milan KREK (Slovenia)
16. Professor Pavol JARCUSKA (Slovakia)
17. Fernando SIMON (Spain)
18. Dr Anders TEGNELL (Sweden)

### European Commission:

- Commissioner Stella KYRIAKIDES (Chair)
- Giorgos Rossides, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
- Prof. Peter PIOT, Special Advisor to the President of the European Commission
- Julia SPENCER, Policy Advisor to Prof. Piot
- Sandra GALLINA, Director General, DG SANTE
- Pierre DELSAUX, Deputy Director General, DG SANTE
- Roberto REIG RODRIGO, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
- Chrystalla PAPANASTASIOU-CONSTANTINOY, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Kyriakides
- Thomas VAN CANGH, Policy Assistant to Director General Gallina
- Cristina MODORAN, Policy Assistant to Director General Gallina
- Sigrid WEILAND, Scientific Assistant to the Special Advisor to the EC President on COVID-19
- Nicolas PRADALIE, Secretariat General

ECDC

- Dr Andrea AMMON, Director

EMA

- Emer COOKE, Executive Director
- Marco CAVALERI, Head of the office Anti-infectives and Vaccines