

European Commission's advisory panel on COVID-19

Report first preliminary meeting (audioconference)

Thursday 12/03/2020 at 19:30

The President explained the context, mandate and composition of the panel.

All members warmly welcomed the initiative and expressed strong commitment to contribute ('ready to talk whenever needed').

Messages picked up:

- Priority message: all Member States should take it seriously.
- It is no longer possible to stop the pandemic, only to delay it.
- The situation in France this week has shocked the medical profession because after a first wave of older (80+) patients, there is now a second wave of 30 to 50-year-old who are being hospitalised.
- Need for more European coordination and harmonisation. Schools are closed in Ireland, but not in Northern Ireland. Differences in containment and management policies are difficult to explain and erode public trust.
- Pressing issues: testing strategies in a context of scarcity of testing devices; what explains the different epidemiology across Member States; prioritisation/sorting of patients in a context of scarce health care capacity; impact of social behavior measures like closing of schools and how to maximise their effectiveness; when to stop measures (what duration should be announced); what health check measures could be recommended as alternative to border closures.
- Some discussion on the value of modelling of likely flows of patients (linked to flight patterns, for example).
- ECDC's risk assessment provides a basis for possible recommendations on testing strategies.

The President stressed the need for simple, clear and bold, but always science-based, recommendations.

The panel will be publicly announced. Members participate in their individual capacity, not representing a Member State or other interest. Rules of the game to be clarified (confidentiality rules, etc.). Members suggested two deliberations per week.

Follow-up: next call on Sunday evening at 8 pm on the basis of an agenda to be sent by the secretariat.

Participants in the phone conference:

- COM: President, Commissioner Kyriakides, I. Juhansone, K. Vandenberghe
- Peter Piot (London School of Tropical Medicine)
- Marion Koopman (Erasmus MC)
- Arnaud Fontenet (Institut Pasteur)
- Andrea Ammon (ECDC Director)

Excused:

- Christian Drosten (Charité)
- Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)